The Closing Ministry of J. Pellatt

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OF

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NOTE.

All the quotations from Scripture in this collection are from the J. N. D. translation, which Mr. Pellatt always used.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

AS THE EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND THAT WHICH LEADS TO ASSEMBLY PRIVILEGE.

(Rev. i. 9, 10; Acts xx. 7, 11; John xx. 19, 20; 1 Cor. i. 1, 2.)

I am not sure, beloved friends, whether these scriptures will indicate what we have to say. I have not read them with any thought of an exposition of them, but because I think they indicate the points we desire to bring before you—that is, christian fellowship, and then heavenly privileges of the saints at the present time. I might use the word assembly and say that we desire to bring before you the fellowship of the assembly and heavenly privileges of the assembly.

I have been very much exercised about speaking here this evening. It were easy, in a sense, to occupy the time by the utterance of words, but that is not what is before us; but what we have before us in our small measure, and in a sense of our own feebleness, is really the

spiritual prosperity of the saints. We trust we can speak honestly before the Lord and say that above everything else that is what we desire.

In the first place, the point I have in my mind in reading this scripture (Rev. i.) is that things are there brought before us individually. If we speak of the fellowship or the privileges of the assembly we are not, of course, speaking about the fellowship or privileges of an individual, but of the assembly, and I trust we are speaking of it in full view of scripture. We are not speaking of the fellowship privilege of "brethren" so-called, for it has come to pass that the term "brethren" (I do not know that we can altogether help it) often means, with some of us, a certain number of saints, but we desire for ourselves and for you that all this might drop out of our minds for the time being and that we may come back to the scriptural use of the word "assembly" as really embracing every Christian. But while one is desirous to have scriptural thoughts, scriptural conceptions, feelings, and affections for all Christians, for all the saints of God—all who comprise His assembly, whether we speak of its fellowship or its privilege, we have to *begin individually*, and not only have we to begin individually, but in a certain sense we never lose our individuality. Though we may speak of ourselves in

connection with the assembly we have to take account of ourselves individually; and whether it be the fellowship or the privilege of the assembly our ability to answer to the one or to the other is really the measure in which things are true of us individually. To speak simply, take the scripture we have read in Acts xx. 7. "And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread" (not simply the disciples at Troas, it is "we," inclusive of Paul and his company who were there at that time). Now I think I am addressing a company who are familiar with that. I am addressing those who are in the habit of coming together on the first day of the week to break bread; but our coming together on the first day of the week to break bread does not in itself change our individual spiritual condition. If I leave such and such a place, and come into this room, the fact of getting ready and leaving my house and coming to the room and sitting down with the Lord's people here does not change my spiritual state.

I want, beloved, in connection with that scripture we read in Revelation i. to emphasize that which is individual; not simply as to the possession of the Spirit, but that which is individual in connection with the *activities* of the Spirit in me. We are not going to discuss the point as to whether every Christian has

the Spirit; we are assuming that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit, but I believe it needs to be emphasized in our souls at this time—what must be true of us individually. If it is not true of us individually the fact of fellowship with others in the breaking of bread, or the question of outward association with others who are spiritually fitted for the enjoyment of privilege, will not help us.

It is wonderful how John speaks of himself. If he had said: "I John, an apostle," we might have been interested in what he was about to say, but if he had said *that* we should have had to stand off, as it were, we should have had to say—it is not common ground. It never was common ground even when the apostles were here among the saints. "He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints," but it could be asked even then: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" Not by any means: "Having then gifts differing." But look how John speaks. He says, "I John, your brother." If a man speaks of himself as your brother, you may get close to that man; there is no distance, and more—there is no difference; it is common ground. But it is not only "I John, your brother," but it is also "and *fellow-partaker*." That is the language of fel-

lowship. Now I need not say to you—because it will be very obvious to every one here—that as banished to the Isle of Patmos it was not possible for John to give expression to his fellowship in the breaking of bread; you would have to have more than one saint for that; you might have the breaking of bread with two saints, or three, or more; but let me emphasize this—John brings himself before us on common ground as our "brother," and he is in fellowship. Oh! you say, could a man be in fellowship without breaking bread? Excuse me if, in reply, I ask you: How is he going to break bread according to scripture if he is *not* in fellowship? If I understand the breaking of bread, it does not *produce* fellowship; the breaking of bread is the scriptural and divinely-appointed *expression* of it, but fellowship must exist. What else could you make of the order of the words in Acts ii. 42: "And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers"? That is the right order. Does Paul call in question the fact of the Corinthians being Christians? Look at the very opening of his epistle to them. He addresses them, "To the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints"—not "called *to be* saints." They were constituted such by divine

calling. So far from calling in question their Christianity, he speaks of it as a matter of thanksgiving, and he does not hesitate for a moment to give expression to his assurance concerning them—assurance that not only covers the present but reaches on into the eternal future; and yet, beloved, you may have a number of Christians and they may break bread—(that is, *outwardly*—there is the table and the bread and the wine, and things may be done in a kind of orderly way), but if the truth of fellowship is not there, if they are not in fellowship, how would that affect their outward breaking of bread? Well, in Paul's judgment it would so seriously affect it that Paul would absolutely deny that their breaking of bread was the Lord's supper. Now that may seem a kind of paradox, but that is just what he says in chapter xi. 20. Ostensibly, and possibly in outward form, there was the breaking of bread, but he says, "When ye come together therefore into one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper." And he says why; his statement is not arbitrary, or one which is unsupported by good reasons. The first thing, then, is individuality, and we have got to be in fellowship, and the question is, *How?* Well, what we desire to affirm most emphatically is that everything in Christianity not only *subsists* in the power of the Spirit of God, but everything in Christianity

must be *taken up* in the power of the Spirit of God. If the breaking of bread is taken up apart from the activities and power of the Spirit of God in us, it will lose its proper character. This was the case with the Corinthians; the reality of fellowship was not there; externally they were in fellowship and responsibly they were in fellowship, but fellowship was not there—they were carnal—fleshly. "For whereas there are among you emulation and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk according to man?" These are the specifications supporting and proving the apostle's charge that they were "carnal," "fleshly." It is a serious thing.

I have thought—I do not speak positively, but as a suggestion—that the opening of 1 Corinthians is very significant. In chapter i. the cross of Christ is emphasized, and it is the cross of Christ not simply as meeting the question of man's sins, but as meeting the whole state and condition of man according to flesh. There were great differences in that day with regard to man according to flesh, and there are great differences now. Some of them at that time were very religious—they were the Jews. Some men were not religious, they were intellectually cultured men, they were philosophical men, but, differ as they might in the sense in which we have just spoken, they were

united in their opposition to the truth. Why? Because the cross set man according to the flesh—religious man according to the flesh, aside; indeed, it was the sentence of divine judgment upon that man, and it was just as much the sentence of divine judgment upon the other man, the philosophical man. The preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling-block to the Jew.

But in chapter ii. what is emphasized is the *Spirit*, and I presume that you would agree with me that it is on the ground of the cross—the cross as that in which man according to flesh has been judged and judicially terminated and set aside for ever from before God—that it is on that ground the Spirit is given. Now if that is the ground upon which the Spirit is given, it is only as the truth of the cross is really made good in our souls that we may expect the activities of the Spirit of God in us.

Now take chapter xi. 31. What does Paul say there? "If we judged ourselves, so were we not judged." That is the practical power of the cross so brought to bear on my soul that I judge myself: "But let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread and drink of the cup." They were refusing to judge themselves at Corinth and they were coming under the judgment of the Lord. I venture to say

this—some of us get over bad conduct or bad ways because perhaps we have grace enough to pull off the bad fruit when it appears, but we do not *judge* ourselves. There will not be bad fruit or bad conduct if there is the judgment of self.

In chapter v. the apostle is beginning to deal with the saints in a very practical way—a very real way, and what comes to light is that the failure to judge themselves at Corinth was bearing its bad fruit in many ways; but what I call your attention to for a moment is this—he brings in the truth of the Passover: "For also our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." Now while the head of each family in Israel had to take the lamb, and was responsible for the slaying of it, you must remember that was only true in the beginning; after priesthood came in, the priest attended to the slaying of the paschal lamb; but when we come to Christianity you and I have had no part in the death of Christ—"our passover." For Christ our passover *has been* slain for us; but where the truth is brought to bear upon us in this passage is—just as the feast of unleavened bread lasting seven days (a complete period), was based upon the passover and was really the practical answer in the Israelites to what the paschal lamb represented and typified—so it is here; he applies it to us, and here is

the real reason why these beloved saints at Corinth were not in the truth of fellowship. Hence when they came together ostensibly to break bread Paul said, I cannot own it, "this is not to partake of the Lord's supper."

So in chapter v. we come to the bottom of this; their failure was in what the feast of unleavened bread sets forth; there was not in them the practical answer to the death of Christ as the true passover. Instead of purging out the old leaven, Paul brings them face to face with the fact that the old leaven had been allowed by them and it was active among them, and so they are called upon to purge out the old leaven that they might answer in their practical condition to what was true before God of the saints viewed in the light of the death of Christ as our true passover. There was their failure, and how could there be the activities of the Spirit? The Corinthians had the Spirit—chapter vi. is positive proof of it—the apostle does not challenge the fact of their having the Spirit; he owns in it chapter ii. and he owns it right through his epistle—he owns it in chapter iii., for, apart from the Spirit, how could the saints be spoken of as the temple of God? He is speaking to them individually, as it were, of their bodies being the temple of the Holy Ghost, "which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your

own, for ye have been bought with a price"; but he most emphatically challenges their having the activities of the Spirit. He says, I cannot speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. I know that many of us have dropped, perhaps unconsciously, into the thought that "spiritual" describes some wonderful attainment on the part of Christians, but it is not so. If you are a Christian you ought to be spiritual. To be spiritual is the normal condition of every Christian; one might say God has had it before Him in giving us the Spirit that we might be spiritual. Has God given us the Spirit that we might grieve Him, and that we might allow the flesh—indulge the flesh? No; He has given us the Spirit that we might be spiritual and not carnal. For this there must be correspondence and fellowship with Christ's death.

Now where the trouble lay was in the fact that there was not an answer in their souls to the death of Christ as the passover lamb. And let me say one simple word—when it speaks of Christ as our passover (the great truth set forth in the passover was God acting in judgment—it was a night of judgment, and in the blood of that lamb, sprinkled with the bunch of hyssop on the two side posts and the upper door post of the houses where they dwelt, presented for the eye of God), there was this fact set forth: that the judgment of God had already taken

place; the blood which was sprinkled there sheltered and screened them. . . . I trust you will in grace bear with my saying a word as to this, but I feel that in these days many of us are occupied and working away with a *superstructure* in Christianity, when the real trouble is that which is connected with the moral *foundations* of Christianity in our souls; we are occupied with the superstructure, and we do not get on very well with it. What is the cause? The foundation is lacking in our souls. And for this we have not to look on one another, but each one of us to see to it for ourselves.

Well, the Corinthians were not ready for the supper. The supper is the divinely-appointed expression of the fellowship, and it is most precious to me, if one might for a moment speak personally—it becomes more precious than ever to me in all the years that pass by; but, beloved brethren, *the fellowship must be there.* The Corinthians were partaking of the supper *outwardly*, and in doing so they were eating and drinking judgment to themselves. I need not stop to say to you that the Lord never designed that in the breaking of bread you and I should be eating and drinking judgment to ourselves; the Lord intended that it should stand till He comes, and as the precious expression of the truth of our fellowship together

—fellowship based upon His death, a fellowship that calls for correspondence with that death, and a fellowship together in His love expressed in His death; that is the Lord's supper.

Well, I have dwelt thus long on the individual side of it; I trust that we may be able to receive it and to take it home to ourselves, for the Lord does individualise things. I am aware that fellowship in the very conception of it is the fellowship of the assembly of God; indeed, I do not know any other fellowship—I am not concerned about any other but the fellowship of the assembly of God, and while it necessarily embraces all who are in and of the assembly it does not at all interfere with individual responsibility: "Let a man judge himself, and so let him eat"; that is individual. I am coming to the supper every Lord's Day morning, but it is a solemn consideration—am I really in the truth of fellowship? It all turns upon the Spirit of God, and the free action of the Spirit of God in your soul, and that depends on whether you are in correspondence with the judgment of God as expressed in the death of Christ as our passover. He has borne the judgment, but, mind you, those who are sheltered and screened by that blood are those who are called upon to keep the feast of unleavened bread; and if the

leaven is allowed individually, or if it is allowed collectively, it vitiates fellowship and it vitiates the breaking of bread. You cannot have the Lord's supper apart from the truth and reality of fellowship, and the truth and reality of fellowship involves your unconditional acceptance of the judgment of God as expressed in the death of Christ as our passover. It is not the passover at the supper; it is a different aspect of Christ's death altogether. In the Lord's supper it is the Lord's death as the expression of His love for us; you cannot have any words better than the Lord's own words: "This is my body, which is for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you." It is His death as the expression of His love, and it is the expression of God's love for us. It is not only the "love of God which is in Christ Jesus," but it is the death of the Lord Jesus wherein He expressed His love for us that the love of God finds its full and perfect expression; not that we can separate them; you may distinguish them in a certain sense, but you cannot separate them. . . .

I do not see how I could dare to come next Lord's Day morning and sit down with the saints to partake of the Lord's supper if I were not self-judged. I beg you to bear with this; I say it for the sake of the truth; we need it in its living, practical power in our

souls. No amount of correct statements of doctrine or correct ways of putting things (I fully believe in doing things decently and in order), but no amount of that will form a substitute for the inward and spiritual reality of christian fellowship; that can only be known in connection with the free action of the Spirit of God in us. . . . I know how we are tested, and nothing puts us more to the test than when something is done by somebody that makes us feel, "Well I know that is not right," and when it is done it often becomes the occasion of that which is not consistent with the truth which we have been feebly attempting to put before you.

In chapter i. 9 the Apostle Paul says, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And what is the next verse? Well, I will leave you to find out what it is; I tell you, it will pull you up ("Now I exhort you, brethren," &c.); it is intended to pull up every one of us. We often drop down to the miserable, low level of religious systems, while loudly denouncing them! May the Lord bring it home to us, and bring us into the reality of christian fellowship!

I wish I were able to speak of the blessedness of the divinely-appointed expression of it. The expression of fellowship in the breaking of

bread stands in relation to the spiritual—the heavenly privilege of the assembly as brought before us in a scripture like John xx. And do not let your minds drop down to some quibble; get the *reality* of what this wonderful spiritual privilege of the assembly is.

Well, I ask you, what is the relation of christian fellowship, and the truth of christian fellowship as expressed in the breaking of bread, to what is beyond it—the privilege? I will tell you. There is a scripture I have often thought of which illustrates it. It is in the last chapter of Revelation—"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city." The expression of christian fellowship is the gate into the city; it is the gate into the marvellous privilege that is found inside the city. A beloved servant of the Lord, alluding to the meeting—when the saints come together on the first day of the week to break bread, he said, "It is the meeting-place—it is the gate into the city." I can think of the gates, but I can hardly think of them apart from the city; you go "through the gates into the city." The Psalmist says, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem"; he was delighted at the thought of going through those gates and entering the city. I wish that our hearts were

fairly ravished with the thought of it; I wish we knew the spirit of that—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." What is in the city? Well, the tree of life is there. "That they might have right to the tree of life." There is a wonderful, illimitable, unspeakable wealth of spiritual and heavenly privilege found in the city!

Now is the time to go in for the reality of the truth of Christianity, whether it be the privilege or the fellowship of the assembly. There are, I fear, a good many in a path of pretension and assumption; they boldly say, *We* are the assembly, *we* are the church. On the other hand there is the ignoring of the truth of the assembly—utter independency! And the only thing that will preserve from either the one or the other is the *truth* of the assembly. If I find a few people who are in the truth of the assembly, or the privilege of the assembly, I am glad to have the opportunity of being with them, but we want to stand for the *truth* in these days.

I might have called your attention to the fact that all the four scriptures that I have read are connected with the same day—it is the resurrection day; it is the day on which the Holy Ghost descended; it is the assembly day; the Christianity day; and it is also called the *first* day, or the Lord's day. As the Lord's

day, we think of it in connection with Him personally, and we think of all that belongs to Him, and as connected with Him, as the Lord; and if we speak of it as the first day of the week we think of the new order of things, and the new scene that has come in. We might have spoken of these scriptures in that way, but it was the *truth* I desired, as the Lord might help me, to put before you simply, and I trust He will be pleased to use it. Well, it is a wonderful thing to be so self-judged, as to be really keeping the feast of unleavened bread in sincerity and truth, and to answer in my soul to the judgment of God expressed in the death of Christ as the passover; to be in the *truth* of fellowship, and being in the truth of fellowship to be permitted to give expression to it in the breaking of bread; and, remember, you find it is the gate into the city; you are in the city of heavenly, spiritual, privilege, and when in that city you will know what belongs to it, and what belongs to it crowns everything, and that is His presence in the midst! "*Then* . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace unto you," and the disciples "rejoiced" when they saw Him in the midst. That was the joy connected with His own presence as in the midst.

May we, beloved, increasingly know that joy —not only know what it is to sit down together

and break the one loaf and drink of the one cup, and thus practically announce ourselves one body, but to find that the breaking of bread in the power of the Spirit is the open doorway into spiritual and heavenly privilege. May the Lord add His blessing.

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

(Luke xxiv. 27–53; John xx. 10–20.)

I am sorry, beloved, not to read the entire passages, but I think that what I have read will suffice to bring what we have to say before you.

We have, in the passages I have read, three wonderful facts concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and I need not say that if they concern Him they ought to concern us, because when you come to Christianity everything is really so inseparably bound up with Himself, and with facts concerning Himself, that I am sure nothing could be more important, more deeply interesting to us, than the consideration of the facts concerning Himself.

I want to speak very simply. The first fact is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, pursuing the order of our reading, the second fact is the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then the third fact, in what is recorded in John xx., is the Lord coming into the midst of His disciples as they were thus gathered together, and what is connected with His presence as thus found in the midst. But

if we take account of time we should have to say that the third fact precedes the second, because as a matter of fact the Lord Jesus Christ in John xx. had not ascended—He was risen from the dead, but He had not yet ascended. Indeed, I suppose there would be at least a period of forty days between His resurrection and taking His place in the midst of His own, as recorded in John xx., and the fact of His ascension as recorded in the closing verses of Luke xxiv.

Let me say further—these were three wonderful facts of actuality. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was an actual fact. I wish to dwell upon it for a moment, because I would that the Spirit of God might so bring these facts before us that they might affect us in all their actuality; and so with regard to the fact of His ascension it is actual; so with regard to His coming into the midst of His disciples as it is brought before us in John xx., it was *actual*. I suppose with regard to time that both the first and third facts occurred on the same day. His taking His place in the midst of His own was on the very day of His resurrection, while the second fact—the fact of His ascension, did not occur until the end of that period mentioned by Luke in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles—the end of the forty days.

The actual appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of His own in John xx. is really a pattern (I use the word because it is so freely used amongst us), and it is a pattern, beloved friends, of the assembly; not the assembly as in the light of 1 Corinthians, where the world is in view, and where those who do not believe may come into the midst of the company, but the assembly in a spiritual way, and not only in a spiritual way, but the assembly in regard to real enjoyment of heavenly privileges; and so (if we take the actual fact recorded in John xx. as a pattern, though its application to us would be in a spiritual way, and we should have to take it in that sense out of the realm of what is actual and transfer it to the realm of what is spiritual), it is none the less true. I know there are those who seem to think that if you talk about things that are spiritual you talk about things that are not real, but it is not so at all. It is a fact of spiritual reality in its application to us, and I have not much doubt that so far as regards the moral order of these three scriptures, that we have read them to you in their correct order. We first learn the Lord in connection with resurrection, and then we learn the Lord in connection with ascension, and with all that it involves for us in connection with Christianity, and then I

think the climax is reached in learning the Lord in spiritual reality as coming into the midst of His own as assembled.

I wish to speak first of the Lord in resurrection. I am very conscious of great feebleness in attempting, in any way, to speak of such marvellous facts—facts of such tremendous importance. I could not hope in any sense whatever to cover the ground: I could not pretend in the course of a few minutes to speak to you of all that is involved for God and for us in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it is difficult in a certain sense to speak of these three facts without at least an allusion to what goes before and to what fairly underlies these facts, and to what gives them their wonderful significance and meaning—I mean the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have four accounts of His death: we have Matthew's account, and Mark's account, Luke's account, and John's account. I cannot take the time, beloved friends, to mark out in any detail the distinctions and differences, but I would rather allude to the broad general fact of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has often been said that in Matthew and Mark He is the Victim, hence in Matthew and Mark you get that cry from His lips on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but in

Luke He is not exactly the Victim; that is, it is not exactly in that way that Luke presents Him in connection with His death; He is rather the offering Priest; He offers Himself, as we get it in Hebrews—"Who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God." But John's account must for ever stand alone; it has its own unique character; He delivers up His spirit—that is the wonderful thing when you come to John's account of His death. That is a marvellous fact. It is not in your power, or mine, or in the power of any one to deliver up one's spirit, but it was in *His* power; after He had cried He bowed His head and delivered up His spirit. Not only, beloved, is He presented in John's gospel as a divine Person in manhood, but even speaking of Him for a moment as a Man—oh, what a Man! Such a Man had never been in this world before. He did not need to wait for His own death, or His own resurrection; He could say at the grave of Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life." Resurrection and life were inherent in Him as a Man. The Father had given to Him as Man to have life in Himself. If you think of Him as a divine Person only, you could not speak of anything having been *given* to Him; as a divine Person all was His; He was equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead; but He had taken upon

Him the condition of Man, and so He says in John v.: "For even as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself"; and then in chapter x. He says: "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again"—"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself." Have you considered Him in this wonderful light? *What* a Man! I am inclined to think that the title—the inherited name according to Hebrews—the Son of God—is not a title or name that describes Him so much as a divine Person; it describes Him as a Man born in time; in His relationship to God *that* Man was God's Son. It is true that underneath that—never apart from it—there is the blessed fact that He was the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. But, not to multiply words, what I say is, that John's account of His death is unique—He delivers up His own life; and so it is with His resurrection, as He says in chapter ii. of this gospel: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; He was alluding to His own body. He delivers up His spirit, and He raises Himself; it is all His own blessed act, and He is not "carried up" into heaven in John; He says: "*I ascend*"; it belonged to Him; He had that right, that privilege, in His own Person as Man; He says:

"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

I have made a sort of digression, yet I trust it will not be without some profit; but I want to go back to the fact of His resurrection. I need hardly say that the resurrection presupposes death, whether on the part of the Lord or anybody else. Some of us may be in the room to-night who will never know resurrection, because the apostle says: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet"—it is a wonderful fact (I can hardly forbear alluding to it). People say: You have got to die. I say: No, in a real sense—a literal sense—I have *not* got to die. If the assembling shout should be heard to-night, not one of us Christians in this room would ever fall asleep—we should all be changed: in the practical effect it comes to the same thing, whether we are raised or changed, but for the moment I call your attention to the fact that resurrection, whether of the Lord Jesus or of the saints, implies death. And so with the Lord Jesus. He really died; even in John His death is very real; indeed, the reality of it in John stands out, perhaps, as it does not stand out in any other gospel, because it is only in John that we get the incident of the Roman soldier, and the

spear thrust into His side. Whatever peculiar character or significance attaches to His death in John's gospel, you cannot read that record without the reality of it coming vividly before you. It is said "He was already dead," hence the action of the soldier—"The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that had been crucified with him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." Wonderful witness to the reality of His death!

Now to come to the resurrection. I hardly know how to begin to speak of it, because it is so marvellous—so transcendently great; but there is no fear of over-statement; the question is, can we take it in—can we speak truly according to the scriptures of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? In the most simple way we might speak of its *effect*, for it had a wonderful effect upon the disciples of the Lord; you can hardly conceive of a greater moral effect than Luke xxiv. gives you as to this company. If we take account of them in the beginning of the chapter we see how they were affected by the death of the Lord! Peter says in his first epistle: "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead." Those two had had their hopes, but when the Lord joined them in that walk to Emmaus, they said mournfully, "We *had* hoped"; they thought it was all over. But what a change His resurrection made! We have not the details of His appearing to Simon, but we have the details of His appearing to the two that went to Emmaus. What a moment it was to them when they "constrained" Him; He *could* be constrained, and He is still constrainable; He loves to be constrained by those He loves and by those who love Him. "*He made* as though he would go farther"—that brought out the constraining from them and He went in. "And it came to pass as he was at table with them, having taken the bread, he blessed, and having broken it, gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him." He took the place and gave thanks and broke the bread. That was enough; they had been with Him before, they had not forgotten it, and the moment that action took place they knew Him.

Then when they were gathered together—they had not, as a company, seen Him yet, but Simon had seen Him, they had Simon's

testimony, and on the strength of Simon's testimony the fact of His resurrection was the theme of their conversation, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon. . . . And as they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst." Were you ever so happy, beloved, that you were afraid to speak? Such joy filled their hearts—a kind of surprised joy, they hardly dared to speak. *He was risen.* All their trouble was over; their sadness, their reasonings and unbelief—all over!

Now I think one might say a word about the resurrection of the Lord in regard *of God.* The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has been a wonderful thing for God. If it be a question of the declaration of the righteousness of God, that was at the cross. If it be the question of atonement, that was at the cross, all that it involves was set forth at the cross. I would not brook for a moment anybody that would dare to add to the cross of Christ, because we know that all was completed in His death. But then, what of God? Sin had come in on the part of man, and the question of sin had been met—it was met in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; but was there nothing else in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ besides meeting the question of sin? We know better than that. In the heart of God there had been counsels of grace before the founda-

tion of the world was laid, and in raising Christ from the dead God reached the moment when He could put into effect as to man the counsels of His grace; He could express toward man what was in His blessed heart. I think we may say that if it is the death of Christ alone it is a scene of judgment; we shall never know the depth of all His sufferings; no heart could conceive them. When we contemplate them in any measure we can only bow our hearts adoringly. In the cross we see all that *man* could do, but that is not atonement. When the wrath of God came upon Him, when God made His soul an offering for sin, when God "put him to grief," who could presume to sound the depths of those sufferings through which the Son of God passed on the cross? All that man inflicted upon the Lord Jesus Christ never wrought one atom of atonement; it was what He suffered at the hand of God. Now what must it have been to God to raise that One from the dead! God longed for the moment when He could express toward man all His pleasure and His wonderful thoughts of grace! Well, now, that is the resurrection. There is no forgiveness for man, no justification till you come to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ—there is no salvation at all until you come to the resurrection. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But Christ *is* raised and

the believer's faith is not in vain. "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." His death effected things greater than that—beyond that. When Christ was raised from the dead there came to pass in God's mind a scene—a world altogether *beyond* death. There never was a death like the death of Christ, and there never will be; you and I might die naturally, but we could not put into our death what was put into the death of the Lord Jesus Christ—the question of sin, the claims of God, the wrath of God, everything on that side was brought to an issue in the death of Christ. Hence in His resurrection a world beyond death was opened—a world of life—life according to God, life for man according to God, where every question of sin, and every question of the judgment of God has been settled—a world that Satan can never touch. Do you believe it? Are you in the good of it? You pass through the death and resurrection of Christ into a world of life and glory.

Now I just want to say this: you must give to resurrection its proper character. You need not detract from it. Resurrection is the great evidence of the power of God. If sombody said to me, Search the scriptures and give me the greatest proof that scripture affords of the power of God, I would not go to Genesis, I would go to the first chapter of Ephesians. It

is as though the Holy Ghost, through the Apostle Paul, just piled up the words till they could not be piled any higher; it is as though there were a tremendous effort on the part of the Spirit of God to impress upon us "the surpassing greatness of his power to usward who believe." What a marvellous exercise of His power when God raised Christ from the dead; it will ever remain the foundation of the effectuation and accomplishment of the counsels and purpose of God. Who would detract from it? I would that I were equal to speak suitably of it.

Then the second thing I want to speak of is the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great thing to be able to see things as scripture presents them. One thing connected with the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is glory, and consequent upon His ascension and glorification is the Spirit. Where should we be practically without the Spirit? We might talk of resurrection, but what would it amount to apart from the Spirit of God? Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost puts it very plainly. There was the great fact that the Holy Ghost had come—a divine Person—with unmistakable attestations and proofs, and Peter rises to the occasion, and how does he account for it? *Christ was exalted.* He received of the Father, as glorified, the promise

of the Holy Ghost which He had shed forth. So John says: "For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." I would that we might take in all these facts in their proper connection, for they are all facts concerning Him, and, as I said, they ought to concern us deeply. Who wants to separate them? who wants to put resurrection over against ascension or ascension over against resurrection? It would be a very unspiritual person who would do so. No, we want *all*. We cannot do without the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and we cannot do without His ascension.

Well now, to return to Luke xxiv., they witnessed His ascension. He goes up with His hands uplifted in blessing, and the effect was they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. In the beginning of the chapter they are full of sorrow; they cannot tell out the sorrow of their hearts; they thought they had lost the Lord. Look at them at the end of the chapter and you find them in Jerusalem praising God. The Lord had gone up to heaven and He had gone up with His hands uplifted in blessing—in the very act of priestly blessing—and if He went in that sort of way what will He not do for His people? And when you come to Pentecost (because the connection, as you know, between Luke xxiv. and Acts i. is very close—

it is the same writer, this beloved physician, Luke, and he is writing to the same Theophilus, and he just continues it in Acts i.), there they are, and what is the outcome? The Holy Ghost comes down upon them all.

I have tried to say a few words about resurrection, but resurrection in itself does not give another *place;* it does give another *condition*—passed out of death, as it were, into life. Between you and death, between you and the power of the devil stands the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now when He *goes up* it is to another *place.* His death was not for Himself, His resurrection was not for Himself, His going up to heaven was not for Himself. He has gone up as our Forerunner. Hebrews puts it very literally—He appears in the presence of God *for us;* the same One who appeared in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself now appears in the presence of God for us. He is our Forerunner. What does that mean? It means that you and I are going to get there; it is the pledge that the whole company is going to get there. It is not only that you have new condition, that you are clear of death, but you have got a new *place;* and it is wonderful how the Holy Ghost connects things in scripture. Take the five links, as you know, in the chain of Divine pur-

pose in Romans viii. 29—foreknew, predestinated, called, and "whom he *justified*, them he also *glorified*." All is assured, and see the wonderful way the Spirit of God puts it there and states it, as if it had already taken place. And again, "Being justified by faith . . . . we boast in hope of the glory of God." You cannot rejoice in anything unless you are perfectly certain about it; there cannot be rejoicing if there is any uncertainty. A good many people say they *hope* they will go to heaven when they die, but that is a poor thing. By the Holy Spirit you are consciously linked up with the One who *is* there; you are linked up with Him, you have the certainty of the hope.

Now I want to speak a little about John xx., because that is where you reach the top—the summit. It is a wonderful moment when the One who is risen and the One who is ascended comes to take His place in the midst of His people. "The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord." They are together in a very special way; they are together, too, in Luke xxiv., but their being together in John xx. is another kind of thing. One could not speak so positively if we had not what we have when the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene and said, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren," &c. What does the Holy Ghost

say about it? "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

What has taken place? Why, the grain of wheat has fallen into the ground and died, and these are the "much fruit." There is a company here upon the earth that is derived from Himself; His death is the womb of their new existence. He says to Mary, "Go to that company — go to My *brethren.*" There we get the first meeting of the "*brethren.*" People sometimes say: Can you give me the history of the brethren? I say, I can give you their origin; I can tell you the first time the brethren ever met together. He did not say, Go to Peter, or James, or John, but to "*my brethren.*" I wish you could grasp it in a spiritual way, because it is a *company;* it is not a number of people who have got together on the ground of mutual agreement or anything of that sort. He has been into death, and there are His brethren, the "much fruit." They are a wonderful company, derived from Himself. Now, I trust I am not saying too much in saying that they are together in the light of that wonderful message; they are together as His brethren—it is blessed every step of the way; but they are together, not only in the light of the fact that they are His brethren, but they are together in the light of

association with Himself. "My Father and your Father, and my God and your God." That is association, and association in the most marvellous way; you could not conceive of any other association like that; every other kind of association of people pales into utter insignificance when compared with that. They are there in that light, and to that company of His brethren who have derived their new being from Himself, and whom He has set in the light of association with Himself, into the midst of that company He comes.

My time is up, and I must not go further, only to say, what a marvellous thing it is to enter really into that—to know that in spiritual reality. Do not be content with merely reading it in the chapter, blessed as it is. Do not be content short of the blessed Spirit of God making it so real in your heart, that you know the reality of being derived from Himself, and the reality of the light of association with Him, and to crown it all, the reality of His presence in the midst. The disciples "rejoiced" when they saw the Lord. It is the assembly, but it is the assembly in respect of heavenly privilege down here, and this enjoyed, beloved, with Himself in the midst; He the Sanctifier and we the sanctified; He the "Firstborn among many brethren." I have no doubt that the passage in Romans viii.

29 looks on in a way to the future; but then all that is of the future has a present realisation in the power of the Holy Ghost. I trust we may be greatly encouraged. I have spoken very poorly; but I commend the Lord to you and I commend these things to you. You may say you believe in the doctrine of resurrection. You may believe in the doctrine of resurrection and freeze! I put it strongly, but you must *reach* HIM. Do not be content to live in dogmas and theories. Get close to *Himself.* These disciples got close to Him; He possessed their hearts; they were filled with joy when He came into their midst. There was joy in the risen One, and great joy in the ascending One, and oh, beloved, the joy of having Him in the midst cannot be told; it may be known, but you could not express it. It is all an anticipation of what is coming.

May the Lord bless His word to us for His name's sake!

THE HEART OF THE LORD JESUS AT THE MOMENT OF ENTIRE REJECTION.

(Matt. xi. 25-30.)

In the first three words of verse 25 the Spirit of God calls our attention to this wonderful moment in connection with our Lord's path and ministry down here. Generally speaking, what marked the moment on the part of man was the utter refusal and rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ; indeed, speaking morally (not quite actually), I think we get "at that time" the climax of the rejection of our Lord by the inhabitants of the land of Palestine. Confining ourselves to this chapter, there are three things that marked the moment. The first is the sorrowful and painful breakdown and failure of John Baptist. We must not allow ourselves to lower our thoughts or estimation of him because in this very chapter the Lord in His grace bears a most wonderful testimony as to him. He says: "Verily I say to you, that there is not arisen among the born of women a greater than John the baptist," nevertheless, it

is a sorrowful breakdown on the part of that wonderful man. He was no other than the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who had been appointed of God to introduce publicly the Son of God to Israel, and yet it is evident that there is a breakdown. Just fancy that man, John Baptist, sending a message—"Art thou the coming one? or are we to wait for another?"—the man who, on the banks of Jordan, in the presence of those assembled thousands of Israel, had borne that beautiful testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"; then the next day, not publicly, but privately, there had burst from his lips that spontaneous testimony as he looked upon Jesus as He walked, "Behold the Lamb of God"; and the effect of that testimony on two of John's disciples was that they immediately turned and began to follow the One of whom John had just borne this wonderful testimony. Now he is in prison; it is no longer Jordan—no longer the assembled thousands of Israel, and, I would say it sadly, it is no longer with John the energy of the Holy Ghost by which he bore that testimony. He is shut up in prison alone, and having heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent by his disciples and said to Him: "Art thou the coming one? or are we to wait for another?"

Then in the second case we have a very

solemn picture of the moral insensibility and indifference that characterised that generation who were here when the Lord was here, for the language the Lord used—the simile He introduced, emphasizes in a most solemn way their utter indifference and insensibility. There was absolutely no repentance. There were the sweet "pipings" of grace in the ministry of the Lord, but no responsive dancing; there was the "mourning" in the ministry of John Baptist, but no responsive wailing. Hence He says: "But to whom shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the markets, which, calling to their companions, say, We have piped to you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed."

Then lastly we have the Lord's reproach to these cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida particularly, and then Capernaum. In these cities they had been privileged to witness the mighty works of power wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was no repentance, no evidence of any work of God in their souls, no evidence of any proper sense of their responsibility in regard to God. God had sent that blessed One, and in the midst of these cities, on the behalf of God, He had wrought these mighty works of power, and there was no repentance.

I do not dwell in detail upon the solemn

language which came from the lips of the Lord Jesus concerning these cities, but I want to shew you that these things marked that moment, and it was: "*At that time*, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight." I hardly know how to speak of this as I should. How glorious the Lord appears! how glorious morally, spiritually! Many of us have eyes and ears and hearts for that which is merely material and external, but there is nothing of that sort here: what characterises the Lord "at that time" is like a sunburst on a very dark, cloudy and stormy day. I cannot refrain from saying I have a sense of how little I am like Him; how easily we succumb to discouraging circumstances. Many of us can manage a hymn of praise when things are bright and fair, but how many of us could manage a note of praise at a time like this? It is an ascending note of praise, and I am sure it filled the ears and heart of the Father with the sweetest music that had ever risen up from this world; the music of that note of praise not only filled the Father's heart with delight and pleasure, but it has been sounding down through the intervening centuries, and I feel that all of us

here to-night need is to come under the power of the Spirit of God that we may know something of the music of it.

The "Lord of the heaven and of the earth," I understand, expresses the thought of sovereign Ruler. The Father is the sovereign Ruler of the heaven and the earth. No matter who breaks down, no matter what indifference or insensibility or impenitence may be in evidence, He, the eternal Father, sits upon the eternal throne, and He is the sovereign Ruler of the heaven and of the earth. Do not give up in discouragement, do not get under the power of any breakdown here, the Father is the sovereign Ruler of the heaven and of the earth. It was just the suited moment for the Lord Jesus.

You know, speaking generally, the way the Spirit of God presents the Lord to us, especially in the first three gospels. He is "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The record of the notes of praise are very rare; but how sweet this note is; what a contrast to the words that have just left His lips—sorrowful, solemn words, announcing the gathering clouds of divine judgment. But the moment His heart turns to the Father there leaps out from His lips this note of praise: "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the

wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight."

Then let me note another thing. There is, as He turns to the Father, the ascending note of praise as we have seen, and then as He turns to all those about Him—what do we find? The outflowing streams of divine grace! I am afraid if you and I had been there at that time it might have been a sound of murmuring, a note of discouragement, and perhaps we should have closed our hearts against those about us. We might have said, Everything is in vain; there is no use going on with men. Not so the Lord. You know what the Lord Himself says: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and He stands before us the perfect example, the perfect illustration of that. From that heart, beloved, that was filled with the eternal sunshine of the Father's love there leaped this blessed note of praise, and from that same heart He turns to men and says: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and *I* will give you rest." How it makes one long to be a little more like Him!

Well now, let me say, the conditions that are expressed in the three things mentioned in this chapter have obtained from that day to this. They obtain all around us to-night. There is plenty of failure; there is even the

questioning, in the spirit of it, "Art thou he that should come? or are we to wait for another?" and there is still the indifference, the impenitence all about us; but the music of that note of praise may still be heard and felt in our hearts, and those precious streams of divine grace that burst from His lips are still flowing, so that to-night we may still catch the tones of that voice, we may still hear Him saying: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened."

Some one has said that in this passage (the end of Matthew xi.) Matthew and John coalesce. I do not think it is too much to say that what comes out in these wonderful utterances, whether it be the note of praise to the Father, or the expression of His grace, and what precedes it, is not exactly characteristic of Matthew, it would be rather more characteristic of John; but in saying this you understand it is not calling in question the absolute perfection of scripture; you may depend upon it that it is set in the right place; the Spirit of God has put it just where it should be, and the very darkness of the moment, the breakdown of John, the indifference, the insensibility, and the impenitence that formed the background of it only make it shine out the more brilliantly.

Now divine Persons are mentioned here, and let me say it is around the revelation of divine

Persons that all the interest, the value and importance of scripture centre; and surely we have that revelation here. There is first the note of praise to the Father, and then He says: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father." The Lord Jesus never speaks from the standpoint of circumstances. Underneath all the circumstances of His path and ministry here there ever was that wonderful divine circle of holy heavenly relationship between Himself and the Father. It is not always seen, it does not always come out, but it is always there. If we speak for a moment of the circumstances surrounding the Lord—did it look as if all things had been delivered to Him of the Father? Indeed, it did not. I do not think I should be exceeding the scripture if I said that so far as the external look of things went at that time it looked as if the whole ministry and miracles of the Lord Jesus were a complete failure—it *looked* that way. But the Lord had a heavenly and out-of-the-world view; He was not looking at circumstances only. He does look at circumstances in His previous utterances, and His utterances are absolutely perfect; but when He turns to the Father He retires in spirit from all external circumstances of His path, and retreats into that holy, heavenly circle of relationship and affection between Himself and

the Father, and retiring there He can not only send up the note of praise and express His most perfect and absolute acquiescence in, and subjection as a Man to, the Father's will, but He can go on to say: "All things are delivered to me by my Father." He is standing there amidst all this rejection, and indifference, and impenitence, and if the Father is brought before us as the sovereign Ruler of the heaven and of the earth, that sovereign Ruler of the heaven and of the earth has put "all things" (and who would dare to limit it?—I would say the language of the context would require that we should keep to the scope of the Father's sovereignty; He is sovereign; He—the Lord of the heaven and of the earth), has delivered "all things" into the hands of Him who is the Son—He speaks of Himself as the Son, as a divine Person in relationship with the Father—nevertheless, He speaks as *Man down here;* it is to my mind one of the most lovely—indescribably lovely pictures of that blessed One as Man down here.

Now He goes on—"All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father." That remains in all its unchanged force of meaning as true to-night as when those words left His blessed lips. That has not been brought into revelation; it lies beyond the scope of revelation,

and lying beyond that scope, it lies outside what we *know;* though I think it would not be too much to say that at that time the Son even viewed as Man was not known by any one; not that that is the force of the expression; the expression is to be left in its proper force and meaning. "Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son" (that is the same word—real knowledge, not a mere objective acquaintance with the Person), "and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him." From all eternity the Son *had* His home, and *has* His home in the bosom of the Father; and when He, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, was pleased to take up a condition as Man down here, He brought into that, morally, all that belonged to Him as the only-begotten Son in the Father's bosom; He brought that intimate knowledge of the Father. And, further, it *marked* Him, it distinguished Him pre-eminently as a Man while He was here. Hence in the gospels, as it has often been said, He always spoke to God not *as God*, but to the Father *as such;* the only departure that scripture gives us is in connection with the cross when He cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now can you conceive what it would have been if a period had been placed after "Nor does any one know the Father, but the

Son," and if the rest of the sentence had not been there? To my mind it would have been like the blotting out of Christianity. It remains true: "Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son"; but for what reason has the Son, the only-begotten Son in the Father's bosom, come into manhood? In other words, why the incarnation? *That the Father might be morally revealed and known by men down here.* So He adds the words: "and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him." There stand those precious words. One may say that is, in a sense, Christianity. It is the revelation of the Father in the Son as Man down here, and when He is pleased to reveal Him it becomes on our side the knowledge of the Father as revealed in the Son, and there is one lovely word that expresses what that means. Do you know what it means? It means REST. I can remember in days gone by that they used to sing: "There is sweet rest in heaven"; I have no doubt about that, but let me tell you there is rest down here; there is rest in the midst of and in spite of all the conditions that obtain here. He has come to give that rest. He alone could give it. He alone is competent to reveal the Father. We are shut up to that blessed One as Man down here. There is no knowledge of the Father possible in any other

way, but He has come to reveal the Father; so this is the proper connection of verse 28: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest." How? By revealing the Father in Himself. He gives rest. Has it come to your soul? Oh, the rest of knowing the Father revealed in the Son! My beloved brethren, let me say, it is involved in the proper knowledge of Himself. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians iv., speaking of the gifts from the ascended Christ and of their end, says: "Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." It is wonderful how it is put in scripture; it is not said, "He that hath the Father hath the Son"; no, it is, "He that hath the Son hath the Father." You could not have the Father any other way.

Let me venture a little further. The force of the expression—"the Father," here is not the common apprehension of it. It is the Father in His relation to the Son—in His love for the Son. We have in John iii., "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." We have the new covenant in that way, the blessed expression of God's love toward us; but we have more than that; we have in the end of chapter xvii. in the Lord's utterance to the Father, "And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it

known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." Do you not delight to think of Him as the one and only adequate object of the Father's love? By-and-by you and I and all the saints of God shall behold His glory, and that glory will be the adequate expression of the love with which the Father loved Him from before the foundation of the world. Do not lower scripture; if you do, you will lower your own blessing.

He says: "Come to me . . . . and I will give you rest"—and how? By revealing the Father. Now that revelation of the Father is once and for all. But there is our pathway here; we have not yet reached the prepared place in the Father's house, we have a few more days, perchance a few more months or years still to go on through this scene down here; and what about that? The Lord says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." You will find rest right along your path here, no matter what your circumstances are, no matter what happens: up, down, dark, light, joyful, sorrowful, tears or anguish (for Christianity never makes stoics of us), you *shall* find rest to your souls. And now think of that expression

which He uses about Himself—"for I am meek and lowly in heart." That is what the Lord was as a Man down here; that is what marked Him, what pre-eminently characterised Him. He was meek, and He was lowly. We bump pretty hard against the rocks sometimes, and we even bump against one another, and we bump against what we call our adverse circumstances; but do you know why? We are not like Him, meek and lowly. It would not be justifiable for *me* to speak of myself, but it was perfectly justifiable for *Him* to speak of Himself, and it is perfectly beautiful the way He speaks of Himself, and we may be wonderfully helped and instructed by considering the way He speaks of Himself.

But what is His prescription? "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." Does a "yoke" speak of service—of something imposed? Yes. Peter, you know, when up at Jerusalem, said, speaking of Judaism: "Why tempt ye God, by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" You could not say of that yoke that it was easy, nor of the burden it imposed that it was light. There must be something in the yoke, beloved—His yoke, that makes it easy. Do you know what it is? May I attempt to express it in a word? It is *sonship*. The Lord Jesus is so variously

presented in the scriptures; He was the perfect embodiment and expression of all that a man ought to be in relation to God. He is not only the only one competent to reveal the Father, though that is true (no one knows the Father intimately but Himself); but He was the perfect embodiment and expression of all that a man ought to be for God. And what is His yoke? It is sonship. And what is sonship? It is love. "Take my yoke." Did you ever try it? Who introduced sonship? *He* brought it in. Jehovah, of course, had spoken of Israel in that sort of way; but the reality of sonship, as what is proper to man before God, or in relation to God, never was here till the Son came; He brought it in . . . Peter, in the way of contrast, in the opening of his first letter says: "Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ characterises the obedience as well as the sprinkling, and so it is the obedience of Jesus Christ—the obedience of sonship. What makes it easy? Because in the spirit of sonship you only have to do the things you like to do. That is the way it works. Look at the expression of sonship in the Lord: "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid

these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight." . . . To Him God's will was perfectly right; He was not only subject to the Father's will, but He acquiesced in it. He delighted in it. You would not learn sonship by studying me, nor could I learn it by studying you; but I know where you *can* learn it as you can learn it nowhere else—that is, from Him: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from *me*." We are too busy, I am afraid, in these days; we do not take time to sit down and look at Him; we do not take time for the spiritual contemplation of that blessed One. He is not only the perfect expression of God to man, but the perfect expression of man to God. You can "learn" from Him. And it stands out here in a very marked way. He is not only the Son whom no one knows but the Father; but He is as we see Him here that lowly, meek, patient Man, and I am sure when that note of praise went up, with those accompanying words from His blessed lips, that it was a perfect delight to the heart of the Father.

Well, I cannot say more now . . . but whether rich or poor, sick or well, whatever to-morrow may bring, if you take His yoke upon you and learn from Him you will find rest to your souls. You will find it right along

your pathway . . . and the longer you wear the yoke, and the more you learn from Him, the more you will prove "for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

May the Lord be pleased to add His blessing!

WITHDRAW, FLEE, AND PURSUE.

(2 Tim. ii. 15 to end.)

I desire, as the Lord may enable me, to speak in a very plain and practical way in connection with the scripture we have read, especially from verse 19. This scripture is, perhaps, familiar to most here; but we are not here to give instruction exactly or any further light. Many of us take credit to ourselves in connection with our familiarity with the *letter* of scripture, and it is in reference to those scriptures with which we are familiar that we need stirring up and exercise of soul.

Our desire is to speak to you in connection with this scripture in a practical way. If you have come expecting some great unfolding of doctrine you will be disappointed; but I trust the Lord will give us just the word that He can use for our real spiritual help.

It has been conceded for a long time in connection with this scripture that it is the one scripture the Lord has given us to mark out the path for us in the midst of what we speak of as the ruin. I do not want to speak much about the ruin; it is not well to be too much

occupied with it—I am sure the Lord would have us sensible as to the conditions that obtain on every hand, but I think there is a danger of becoming too much occupied with it, and that is not for our spiritual profit. Whatever ruin has come in, you will always find it is connected with the responsibility of man: but in this second epistle of Paul to Timothy, from the outset of it, we are brought face to face with the purpose of God; and that is beyond the ruin. The effectuation—the accomplishment of God's purpose is in His hands—"He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" there is no danger of defeat or frustration or failure in that. I think, generally speaking, the two epistles of Paul to Timothy indicate in the beginning a certain difference. The apostle in the first epistle connects his apostleship with the commandment of our Saviour-God, you will find there is a largeness about it—"all men" are in view. But when you come to the second epistle he connects his apostleship with the purpose of God, and in a certain sense things are more limited—it is not "all men"—"the elect" come into view. What I want you to see is this, that from the beginning of this epistle you breathe the air of the purpose of God. Take what I have read, there is the allusion to Hymenæus and Philetus—they are only sample men—"of whom is

Hymenæus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred," and we get their teaching and the effect of their teaching; they were overthrowing the faith of some; but the next expression stands like a solid, immovable rock, and the waves of error only dash themselves into spray as they strike it, "The firm foundation of God stands steady." It stands steady, and as you touch it spiritually it will impart to your soul its own steadiness, *you* will become steady, you will cease shaking.

The point in the passage I have read is testing but simple. It is the responsibility of every one who names the name of the Lord to stand for the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. He brings in the simile of "a great house," not *the* great house, but *a* great house; but he brings it in to illustrate the prevailing condition at that time. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour," &c. Whose honour? The honour of the Lord. That to me is the centre of the passage: the responsibility resting upon each—"every one"—to be apart from everything that involves the dishonour of the Lord, and to be here in identification with that which would really be for His honour and glory. It is a

great test, because it tests us as to the state of our souls; it tests us, not in regard to a standard of doctrine or knowledge, but it tests us with regard to our affection for the Lord. If the Lord has got His place—His right place—in my affections, I am bold to say that, the honour of the Lord would be dearer to me than life itself; you could put nothing in competition with it, not for a moment.

I think some believers have thought that certain conditions have arisen during the last eighty or ninety years, and that certain things are peculiar to these late years. Do not be mistaken. This second epistle of Paul to Timothy was written a good while ago, and the conditions that are disclosed in it, and the instructions that are given by the Spirit of God in it, have been, not only true, but have been in force from that day to this. It is easy to prove to you that the second epistle to Timothy goes on to the end.

I would now speak of three words that indicate the points of the truth. The first word is "depart from," or "withdraw"; the second word is "flee"; and the third word is "follow," or "pursue"; so that if we answer in any measure to this instruction, these three things will characterise us.

"Withdraw" is a quiet word; it is not to make any fuss or any display about it; the

thing is to *do* it. I cite as an illustration Jeremiah xv. 16, shewing what the force of "withdraw" is, where the prophet says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." What is the next word? He *withdrew:* "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone." Now it was not the fact of eating the Lord's words that brought him into trouble, that made him very happy, when he discovered that he was "called by the name of the Lord." To be called by the name of another in scripture is identification. But it was not that which brought Jeremiah into trouble, it was *withdrawing.* Are you prepared to go through any trouble on account of the Lord—on account of refusing that which compromises His honour and glory? Jeremiah withdrew very quietly, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation." (Jer. xv. 17.) A man may be very indignant and very happy at the same time. Jeremiah was happy in the apprehension of his identification with Jehovah—God of hosts; but that assembly of mockers filled him with indignation. Have you ever "sat alone"? I speak plainly, but it is taken so easy now-

adays. People are found in the *position* of separation, but how did they get there? Perhaps very easily, without exercise. Did you ever "sit *alone*"? It is a real thing. You have withdrawn from iniquity and you "sit alone." Some of us hardly know how to appreciate good company when we get it, and it is because we have never "sat alone." There is first the withdrawing, you separate yourself from the vessels to dishonour, and then there is a word for you personally, not in regard to your associations with others, but in regard to *yourself*, "*Flee* also youthful lusts." And there are four things you are to *pursue*—righteousness, faith, love, peace. You are still addressed individually—you are individual up to this point; you are not in any fellowship. Till you reach this point you are not *ready* for fellowship according to God. You may say, I belong to such and such a meeting. That is a poor thing, and you will prove it so. When you follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, your privilege is to follow these things *with* those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

We are not in the days of 1 Corinthians. I am thankful for 1 Corinthians, it is a wonderful epistle, but do not persuade yourself that you are in the days of 1 Corinthians. It was enough then to say, "To the assembly [or church]

of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," and to add, "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." But now we must have the divine addition, "with them that call on the Lord *out of a pure heart.*" People raise objections; they say—How are we to know who are those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart? I only know one way; that is, to call on the Lord out of a pure heart *yourself;* I do not know any other way.

I am exercised that the Lord might help His people here to-night. And now I am coming to this; and let me speak simply. You know Mr. Darby's translation of 2 Timothy ii. is divided into two paragraphs; if we speak of verses, there are thirteen verses in the first paragraph and thirteen in the second paragraph, and I trust we are all convinced of this—that the scriptures have been written in divine order, and if one might speak for oneself for a moment, I am sure the apprehension in any measure of the divine order in scripture is most helpful.

In the first paragraph, "In Christ Jesus" is the characteristic phrase, and the characteristic phrase of the second paragraph is "the Lord." Now "in Christ Jesus" stands for privilege; but "the Lord" stands for responsibility. The Holy Ghost speaking of "the Lord" says,

"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This should have such an effect on us, it should evoke such a response from us, that we would never rest until we had "*withdrawn*." The test in Christianity is always the affections. Love never fails. If there is a response in our souls to the Lord's mind there will be withdrawing, fleeing, and pursuing, because the Lord has His place in our hearts.

I take you back for a moment to the beginning of the chapter. Paul in writing to Timothy says, "Thou therefore, my child;" that is a word which implies two things, relationship and affection, so that Paul uses it as a term of endearment to Timothy, for there was peculiar affection between them—"Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." I think when you get Christ Jesus mentioned alone it is *that* Person, it is *that* anointed Man. Peter said at the close of his discourse at Pentecost that God had raised up Jesus and had made Him Lord and Christ. I think when you get Christ Jesus alone you get Him as the risen and exalted Man—the Man that God has anointed; but when that little word "in" is attached what do you get then? The thought is not the grace that met me as a poor guilty, lost sinner; I do not mean that there are different

sorts of grace; it is all the grace of God, but it is not grace in that point of view; neither is it the administration of grace to you as a believer in connection with your responsible life here—in your weakness, your circumstances, all that may come upon you, that is not the thought of "grace in Christ Jesus." We spoke on Sunday night of that expression in Ephesians, "The exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." I think that wonderful display of grace on the part of the father in Luke xv. to the younger son is a blessed picture of it. It is not on the side of our need; no, it is the other way; it is if one might say so, the need of God's heart; He wants us in His presence that He might have perfect complacency in us, perfect delight in us; He wants us there so that we might share all that infinite joy that fills His own heart in Christ. How far are we acquainted with "the grace that is in Christ Jesus"? You may say, My sins are forgiven, and I have been justified. Thank God for that. You may say, I have been in trouble—weakness, bereavement, loss of property, various kinds of sorrow here, and difficult circumstances, and the Lord has wonderfully met me, has wonderfully sustained me. Thank God for His grace, and I can thank Him with you. But how about the other side? Have

you touched "the grace that is in Christ Jesus?"—because (let me speak simply, not theologically) when you touch the grace that is in Christ Jesus you are lost in an ocean of love. You say, I have really entered into the heavenly and eternal side of things. Have you? Are you sure? How do you feel about the honour of the Lord down here? It is all very well to go to a nice meeting and talk about how we have enjoyed it (do not think I am against enjoyment; I go in for enjoyment, for the enjoyment of the very best—I mean the best robe, and the ring, and the shoes, the fatted calf, and the music and the dancing, I go in for all that)—but do you *come* out of it like Jeremiah? He sat alone. You can hardly conceive of a man being happier than Jeremiah was, but look at the proof he gives you of the reality and the effect of it. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers," &c. And what is his concern about? The honour of that name, Jehovah—God of hosts.

There are many interesting things that I would like to say to you about this scripture. There is great scope in it in a sense, "Let every one that names the name of the Lord," and yet it is put individually, it says every *one*, and "if *a man* purge himself from these." Do not let us drop into the thought that things have only in the last few years become indi-

vidual, they have been individual from the days of 2 Timothy. You will find it is an invariable principle with God that when He has set up a dispensation or order of things, and when that has broken down through the failure of man in responsibility, God does not give up the truth for one moment. Do you think God has given up the truth of the assembly? I would not walk with people who held that. How could you follow righteousness and faith with such people, to say nothing about love and peace? You could not do it. God has not given up the truth of the assembly, but in the days of 2 Timothy God reverted to the individual. Hence, beloved, I do not know any scripture that ought to rivet us like this. Is there any pretension to being the assembly? We ought to be ashamed of it in the face of this scripture. Mr. Darby said in a letter over fifty years ago, "I would not walk one hour with any company that pretended to *be* the assembly." Is that giving up the truth? No; it is retreating and retiring from a false position to take the only position in which the truth of the assembly can be maintained. And who are these that call on the Lord out of a pure heart? Only a company of individuals, that is all. I beg you to bear with me, but I am not alone in saying what I do. It has been said, I think, in this room by our beloved brother who is

with the Lord now, "There is no other company than the assembly of the living God." There is no other company. Do not think me hypercritical, but things steal upon us so softly, so insidiously, we begin to think of ourselves as a company and we begin to lift up our heads and to take assembly assumption, but it will not do. I am certain of this, that the Lord will not for one moment support any pretension or any assumption of that sort, because if the Lord reverts to the individual why *does* He do so? Because, as to the responsible body, it has broken down and failed, and the Lord says, I am not going to give up the truth, I am going to maintain it in spite of the ruin, in spite of the failure, and I will maintain it in connection with individuals; and God has been maintaining it for nearly eighteen hundred years, and He is going to maintain it to the very last day. He will maintain it till that blessed moment when we shall hear the assembling shout. It is no time to hang down our heads and be discouraged; there is plenty of ruin, but the Lord remains and the Holy Ghost is here.

Now God reverts to the individual. God is wiser than we are. We take steps sometimes to conserve what we think is the truth, but we are not wise. I have no doubt you might take the creeds of Christendom, and I speak respectfully of them; these creeds were written by

very godly men, perhaps the most godly men of their day, and were formulated by them as bulwarks of the truth; but I ask you, Have they maintained the truth? My dear brethren, you know they have not. No; there is no power to maintain the truth in a creed, and you must bear with me in saying that we have reverted sometimes to ecclesiastical actions and ways to maintain the truth, but they do not maintain it. God's way does it, and it is the only way it can be done. Mr. Raven said of this scripture that the language was not ecclesiastical, and Mr. Darby said in his day that scripture was intensely moral. Take these four terms. I am not speaking of the iniquity from which you are to withdraw, nor the youthful lusts from which you are to flee, but of these four things which you are to pursue—righteousness, faith, love, peace. I am bold to stand here and say that there is not a jot or tittle of Christianity that is not embraced in these four terms. We read in Philippians of a brother who "laboured fervently in prayers." And what a labour it was! And what was his prayer for? That they might stand complete in all the will of God. That is righteousness.

We are to *pursue* righteousness. Ah! the inclusiveness of that term, and the exclusiveness of it; it includes every will of God, and

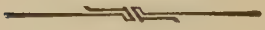
it excludes every will of man. Righteousness is God's will, and I ask you to stop and consider a moment—could you have anything on any other basis? God has put everything on the basis of righteousness. There will be the world to come—the habitable world to come—and beyond that the eternal state, and the world to come will be established on the basis of righteousness, and the eternal state will be the home of it. There righteousness shall dwell for ever and ever.

Then we are to pursue faith. That is not the act of believing—that is not the force of the term always. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." What is the meaning of faith there? Why, just one blessed word that covers within its comprehensive grasp the whole truth of Christianity. Paul spoke to Timothy of some that had sacrificed a good conscience, and what was the result? They had made shipwreck concerning the faith, they had given up the truth of Christianity.

You pursue righteousness and faith, and then what? *Love.* In chapter i. he says that God hath not given us the spirit of cowardice but of power and of love. You may have power (I do not say spiritual power) without love, but the more power you have apart from love the worse it is. If we have power *and* love, the *use* of it is a wise discretion. So here

you pursue righteousness and faith and love. You are to pursue it. What a foundation for peace! You can have peace now. Do not turn it upside down.

I commend these few scattered remarks to you, and I trust God will be pleased to give us distinct exercise. I beg you not to take things too easy. There is not one atom of spiritual movement apart from exercise. May the Lord so bring home the truth to us that in the light of it we may be individually exercised, and that there may be in us an answer to the mind of the Lord in this day.



SEPARATION—IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LORD.

(Jer. xv.)

In one way, beloved friends, what we have read is a very simple passage of scripture: it is an appeal on the part of Jeremiah to Jehovah. The prophet was in circumstances of trial, of reproach and of persecution, and he turns to Jehovah and appeals to Him, asking that the Lord would interpose to avenge him of those who were his persecutors; and in connection with this appeal we learn what had brought the prophet into these circumstances of reproach and persecution, but before speaking at all of the answer that Jehovah vouchsafed to the prophet, I might say, beloved, that I have taken this scripture and bring it before you, because I believe that the time in which we are now living in a very important sense corresponds to the time in which Jeremiah was living; and the circumstances that surrounded Jeremiah find an answer in the circumstances that surround us as the Lord's people, or, if you please, as God's people, at this present time.

I need not tell you that Jeremiah lived on to the close of the history of the people of God in his day. Long before this, of course, the nation of Israel had been divided, and so far as the ten tribes are concerned, their history had closed in judgment; Shalmaneser the Assyrian had carried them away into captivity, and they have been there from that day to the present; they will, as we know, be recovered, and will yet be brought back into the land, and the whole nation will be reunited and brought into blessing; but even as to the kingdom of Judah, this prophet lived very near the end, he lived in the days of Josiah the king, and what marked Josiah's time in the beginning? When he came into the kingdom everything was very dark, they were suffering under the hand of Jehovah the results of their unfaithfulness. But I just want to say that there was a wonderful revival in the days of Josiah and of Jeremiah. The house of God was in a very sad state, and the service of God in connection with it was practically well-nigh abandoned; but God wrought—Josiah was but a youth, but the heart of the young king was in exercise of soul before God, and he began where every true revival generally begins, that is, with God's interests here, and, of course, those interests at that time were centred in the temple —the house of God—just as God's interests

are now centred in the assembly—the church of the living God—the house of God. So Josiah began to clear up things in connection with the house of God. Shaphan was the scribe; Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, was the high priest, and in connection with the work inaugurated by Jeremiah Hilkiah discovered in the house of God the book of the law of God, the book containing the mind of God concerning His beloved people. I must only speak briefly, but the book was given to Shaphan the scribe, and Shaphan carried it to the king, and the book was read, and the finding and the reading of that book was the beginning of a wonderful revival among God's people.

Now Jeremiah alludes to this. In connection with his appeal to Jehovah he writes his own personal experience; he says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, literally found them; but it is not the details that I dwell on, but with the fact itself. What a wonderful thing! "Thy words"—the very words of Jehovah, setting forth what was in the mind of Jehovah concerning His house, and concerning His people—concerning His interests here in this scene.

Jeremiah says: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." You can understand the figure without any difficulty, because it is a very

simple figure; in eating food we appropriate it, and in the appropriation of it we realise the good of it. Eating food is what we are in the habit of doing constantly and literally, but Jeremiah speaks of eating in a moral sense, though the simplicity of the figure is kept up, and the result of eating the words of Jehovah was that he realised in his own soul the good of those words; and the first result was they made him very happy; he says, "and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." But why did they make him so happy? Because those words of Jehovah made known to him the blessed fact of his complete identification with Jehovah, and his complete identification with Jehovah in the way of blessing. It is well to know that a person is happy, but it is better to know *why* they are happy, and Jeremiah tells us why: "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: *for* I am called by thy name, O Jehovah God of hosts"; he learned his complete identification with Jehovah God of hosts; it was such a wonderful identification. As illustration—when a woman marries, she takes her husband's name—she becomes called by his name; so Jeremiah was so wonderfully identified with Jehovah God of hosts, that he says, "for I am called by thy name."

Then you get the next effect of "eating those

words." First—they discovered to him his complete identification with Jehovah, and thus they brought to light his privilege, as identified with that name, and they filled his heart with rejoicing. That was one side, but then the other side was his responsibility, and that which measured his privilege and his blessing on the one side, measured his responsibility on the other side. If being called by the name of Jehovah God of hosts, was the full measure of his privilege, it became also the measure of his responsibility; he was responsible to stand apart from everything that dishonoured that name. So he says: "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation."

Now it was not because of the rejoicing that filled his heart in the discovery of his privilege, it was not on that side that he had got into reproach—although, of course, these things cannot be disconnected—these two sides of the truth are never really apart. You may distinguish them, but you cannot separate them, for they go together. There is joy in the apprehension of privilege, but there is also the exercise connected with the apprehension of the side of responsibility, and, in a word, that is where you get into trial. The devil does not care how happy you are; he is not concerned

about your apprehension of privilege and your joy in the apprehension of it, but what the devil *is* opposed to is *separation*, and separation will get you into trouble. It always has got the people of God into trouble. That is nothing new; it could not be otherwise. I think, in a sense, that it was Abel's separation that got him into trouble with Cain. I think one might say, speaking reverently, it was so with the Lord. Oh! it was His intense separation that man could not bear. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." That was *one* reason why He suffered as He did at the hands of men. There is a wonderful testimony in separation, not in denunciation. Souls will get hardened under denunciation; you can easily get hard, and bitter, in connection with denunciation, but testimony is in separation, and as sure as we are marked by separation we shall be in the reproach that Jeremiah suffered from; and we know from the body of the book how he not only suffered reproach, but he suffered in every way from the hands of his enemies.

Well now, what I want to come to is this. Just as there was a revival in the days of Jeremiah, so there has been a revival in our day, and, let me say, it is God who brings about a revival. God brings about revivals in the history of His people, and He brings them

about for His own glory and for the blessing of His people. You always find, beloved, in a divine revival that God ever has respect to that which He has established, to that which He has set up. There may be but a very few who are directly, personally, involved in the revival, but I am bold to say that in every revival God has in view, not only the maintenance of the testimony which He has established, but He has in view the blessing of His people.

Well, God has been pleased to bring about a revival in our day. He has been pleased to recover the truth for His own glory, and for the blessing, not simply of the few that may be immediately and personally concerned in connection with the revival, but God has in view the whole of His people. I wish we could think of that, because sometimes it seems to me we act as if we thought we were kind of favourites—a few select ones, and that God had some special interest in some few of us that He has not in all His people. Well, there is the revival; but now the question is, what is *your* relationship and *mine* concerning it? God brings about a revival. But then a great many people become connected with it in a mere outward way. It was so in times of old; it is so in more modern times. In the days of Martin Luther there was a revival, and I believe God brought it about. He brought it

about for His glory and for the blessing of His people, *all* His people; yet how many there are that have a mere outward, historical connection with it! They still speak of belonging to reformed bodies or reformed churches; but, alas! it is only like what the Lord says about Sardis, "a name that thou livest and art dead." It may be so now. I am not saying whether it *is* so or not, but it may be a mere historical, outward, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical connection. But what I am concerned about is this, beloved, have you and I in our souls a living, vital connection with that revival which, unquestionably, the Lord has brought about in these last days? I do not wish to undervalue any one or any thing, but I am inclined to the conviction that we have witnessed the last revival in the history of the assembly here, and it is a very serious question—what is your relationship and mine to it?—for, however God may have wrought, and by whomsoever He may have wrought, the revival has come, God has brought it about, and what I think is emphasised in the passage I have read to you is this—that whilst the revival concerns the honour and glory of God, the glory and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whilst it concerns the whole church of God, you and I have to be brought into it *individually*. God has not a remnant of the church before Him. Do you think He

has given up the church? Never. He will never give it up; the church, beloved, is just as much an object of interest and concern with God, and with the Lord Jesus to-night, as at any moment in its history.

But while it is true that the revival is not a matter that has for its object the blessing of an individual, or a number of individuals, but that in it God has the assembly in view, the honour and glory of God, the maintenance of the testimony of our Lord—I repeat that I think what we should learn is, that you and I have got to be brought into it individually. We like large companies, and I am not averse to them; I am very thankful to the Lord for all that are here to-night; but we have to take this matter home to ourselves, each one of us, and we have to look it in the face, how far are we personally and individually in what God has brought about? My father, mother, brothers, sisters, may be in the meeting; but that will not do. If you are going to touch at all what God has wrought, if you are going to know the reality of it, you must know it for *yourself*: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." These things test us as to our spiritual state, as to how it is with us in relation to God. Jeremiah ate His words; he had an appetite for them: have *you* an appetite for the words of God—for the testimony of

our Lord Jesus Christ? Then we see from what Jeremiah goes on to say that the question which was involved in the word of God's truth was identification of God's people with God Himself. . . . You may say, Is not that true of the whole church? Yes. I grant it is; but have *you* got a personal experience with regard to it? Has there been wrought in your soul such a spiritual appetite for God's words, His truth and His testimony? Some people are where I was once myself, when one thought the whole thing—the acme in Christianity, was in being saved, and I am not saying anything against safety, nor certainty, nor enjoyment; but I am opposed to sitting down on the door-step of Christianity. There are a great many religious people in these days, there are a number of people, Christians too, who think that the whole thing is to get a little blessing for themselves. But that is not all; of course we all have to learn our A B C; but that is not the end of it: "Thy words were found, and *I did eat them.*" It is a very serious question—have we learned for ourselves our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ as the prophet learned his identification with Jehovah God of hosts? That is the test. I am afraid that we somehow hide ourselves under the general statement of the truth we know. Oh! you say, I have seen wonderful

things about the assembly. But *how* have you seen them? Have you seen them through the light of the Spirit of God in connection with your own experience? If not, you are only the victim of a theory; it may be a very beautiful theory and quite correct, but that is all. Perhaps you have been brought up in the meetings—have been converted, and you break bread, and I am thankful for it, but you will not mind if I ask you the question, have you really in your soul grasped this—"for I am called by thy name." We did not all learn it so easy; some of us learnt it alone—apart from teachers, or evangelists, and apart from tracts and books—and it cost us something, and I want to press upon you the reality of it. Have you got the joy of it? We are told in the Old Testament that "the joy of the Lord is your strength." You ought to be happy; you and I are divinely entitled to be perfectly happy, and it is a great thing to be happy; you are so safe when you are happy *divinely:* "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name."

Then there is what comes with the happiness; there is responsibility. There are many people of God who claim to see the truth, they like the truth and hold it; but what about the separation? If your separation is not equiva-

lent to your joy, I am rather suspicious about your joy. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation." Have you just left one thing and joined another? That will not do. "I sat alone." *That* will do. You have got to sit alone outside "the assembly of the mockers." In 2 Timothy ii. we read: "If therefore one shall have purified himself from these in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work." Then you flee youthful lusts, you do not do it in a crowd, you do it *alone*, and you pursue righteousness, and faith, and love, and peace; you do that, then you are clear; and when you are clear you find a few more, and then you can walk with them. We want to have a personal experience on these lines at the present time; and now let me say this, lest I should be misunderstood: Do not think I am speaking against fellowship —against the joy and blessedness of walking with a few of your fellow believers in these days. God forbid. But I would like you to enjoy it when you get it—and you will only enjoy it in the measure in which this has been made personally good and true in your soul.

And then, what was the indignation about? "for thou hast filled me with indignation." It

was about the Lord's name. The Lord is your joy, and you are indignant at the dishonour to Him. If you get indignant about *persons* you will get hard, and you will be most unlovely and unlovable. Jeremiah says, "because of *thy* hand." His indignation was for the Lord's dishonour; he could not go on with the mockers. It was his separation from them that got him into trouble; all manner of things were laid to his charge. Well, it seems from the appeal of Jeremiah that the Lord did not come in at once. I take it that the Lord allowed Jeremiah for a while to suffer, and so he makes a desperate appeal. He says: "Why is my pain perpetual," &c. Here is the answer—"Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." What wonderful words! I have no doubt that we need them in these days. "And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee. for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

Of course these words of Jehovah could be, and no doubt were, taken in a literal way by Jeremiah—all in perfect keeping with the character of that dispensation; but *we* must take them in a spiritual way, and let me say that in the answer of Jehovah taken in that way there is everything that the heart of the believer could desire. You can count on the Lord; you can count on His making you to stand; you can count upon Him for your spiritual protection and preservation, for your deliverance. I would like to encourage any trembling heart that has been brought face to face with a little of the consequences of what it is to be true to the Lord at a time like this. He will really cause you to "stand before the Lord"—to have a standing, as it were, in His presence. "And if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." Beware of indiscriminate condemnation or censure of anybody. Learn to discriminate; there is the precious and there is the vile; learn in your souls to discriminate spiritually. God encourages every one of us in that direction. He says: "Thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." If the Lord has separated you, never set your face in the direction of what He has separated you from.

Well, beloved, I have spoken simply and personally. I have not thought of entertaining

or of pleasing you; but I have spoken with some desire of helping you, and I trust the Lord may really take up these feeble, scattered thoughts, and bring them home to you, that they may be a real blessing to you and to us all. Let me say to you, the measure of your helpfulness among your brothers and sisters in the Lord all hangs upon the measure in which in your own soul you answer to the Lord and are found in intelligent response to His mind. Remember there is the privilege, there is the joy, and then, on the other side, there is the responsibility of separation—of being apart from everything that would dishonour His blessed name, by which name we have been called.

SONSHIP.

(Gal. i. 15, 16; iv. 4, 5, 26, 27, 6, 7; Eph i. 3-7.)

It will not be very difficult, beloved friends, in the light of the scriptures we have read, to understand what is in our hearts at this time. We desire to bring before you in connection with the scriptures read (though not confining ourselves to them) the subject of sonship. I feel the greatness and importance of the subject, and how little I am qualified to open it out, and, at the same time, one feels the limitations of our present time.

What I desire, in the first place, is to attempt to shew you from the scriptures, especially the New Testament scriptures, what I might term the origin of sonship, and in connection with the apprehension of this I think we shall be brought to see something of the character of it, something of the significance and meaning of sonship.

In the first place, I think the real origin of sonship is the relationships and affections existing between divine Persons in the Godhead. I speak particularly with regard to the Father and the Son; I think every one of us

must feel that if we are going to understand anything of scripture, anything of the truth of Christianity, we must begin with God, and we must begin with the revelation that God has been pleased to make of Himself in the Person of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; and I am increasingly persuaded, as to myself, that it is most important that we should start there. Now I may say things that are very simple, but I believe they are important, and need to be clearly apprehended in our souls; and I would make this remark—that when you come to the revelation of God in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, what you come to see is this—that in the revelation of God there has come to light the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the way in which God has revealed Himself is in connection with the relationships and affections that have existed from all eternity between divine Persons. I trust I speak soberly and carefully, and that I shall not say anything that would lead anybody to think that in respect of these things there is any ground given for mere intellectual speculation: we are shut up, beloved friends, to the revelation of God as given us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, with regard to the Spirit, there is a simple statement in Mr. Darby's translation,

in the Gospel of John (chap. xv. 26), about the Spirit. We are told that the Spirit proceedeth forth (now mark!) *from with the Father*. Thus you see the blessed Spirit in all His wonderful ministry, whether it is on the side of the revelation of God, or whether it is on our side—our apprehension and appreciation, or, you may say, our entrance into the revelation of God, you see how the Spirit of God Himself stands inseparably connected with the relationship subsisting between the Father and the Son. Well, you can only speak of the Father and the Son according to what has been revealed, and what is really written in the scriptures. To pretend to know one jot or one tittle outside what is recorded in the scriptures would be a vain pretension and would simply indicate that one has some confidence in one's own mind apart from that which is written. We have the wonderful revelation in chapter i. 18 of John's gospel—"No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In that wonderful verse comes to light something of the truth of the relationship between the Father and the only-begotten Son, who subsists and has ever subsisted in the Father's bosom, and, may I say, the use of the word "bosom" not only points out the relationship, but points out

the affections existing between the Father and the Son in such relationship, for the bosom, beloved friends, is used in scripture as a figure of speech to indicate the home of affection, and in this case it conveys the thought of the home of divine and holy reciprocal affections subsisting between the Father and the Son—all the Father's love to the Son and the Son's love to the Father. I am going carefully, and a little slowly, but I want you to get hold of this wonderful subject. What we find is this—we have been speaking of the revelation of God in the Person of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, but in speaking of this the fact of incarnation is, of course, involved; and incarnation, as simply as it can be stated in the light of scripture, is the fact of a divine Person, an eternally-existing Person, who is described as the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, that divine Person has taken upon Him the form of man, the condition of man. To put it in the exact language of scripture, chapter i. 14 of John's gospel states: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth." Whenever He is viewed in scripture as having taken upon Him the condition of man, His personal and distinctive title is the "Son of God." The title

Son of God does not describe Him as a divine Person in *eternal* relationship with the Father; it describes that same divine Person as a Man down here, as a Man born in time, for when He was brought into this world the Father salutes Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." Every thought of begetting, or of having been begotten, must be put out of your mind when you conceive of Him as a divine Person in eternal relationship with the Father; the reasoning of theology is fatally false and misleading; theologians have said that He was eternally begotten before all ages by the Father; it is nothing but confusion; it is as a Man, beloved friends, that we have the account of His generation in time. Then it was that God said to Him: "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee"; and we know from the opening of the Gospel of Luke, when the angel Gabriel had that wonderful interview with the Virgin Mary, how he said to her in response to her beautiful expression of wonderment as to how this could be: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God." (Luke i. 35.)

Now to speak in a very simple way—a very direct way: in that blessed Person—the Son of God who was begotten by the power of God—

by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, we have, as to His actual being here in time, the beginning of sonship. Wonderful men had been here, men owned and used of God; it has always been a marvel to me to read of certain men in the Old Testament scriptures: I am not losing sight of the peculiar character of Christianity, and of what we are brought into in Christianity, but take, for instance, a man like Daniel as the Holy Ghost presents him to us, one feels how small one is in the presence of such a man; but, beloved friends, never had there been such a Man in this world before as that One born of the virgin—begotten in the womb of the virgin by the overshadowing power of the Highest—of the Holy Ghost. There never will be such another as He. We have read, "for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus"; but that Man is not *a* son of God, He is not *one of the sons*, He is *the* Son of God. He, as born into this world, was "the Son of God"; God stood in a relationship to Him *as Man* that He never stood in to any other, and never will. He is the Son of God; and I am sure the Spirit of God would lead us to give Him His proper pre-eminence; He would produce even in our minds, as well as in our hearts, thoughts and feelings in relation to Himself as He would to none other. Now it is in Him you have the

beginning, the setting forth of what sonship is, and I think the gospels help you. I am not taking account of the distinctions between Matthew and Mark and Luke and John; there *are* distinctions, important distinctions, but you may read the four gospels just as they stand, and if you keep your eye upon that blessed Person you may learn the truth of sonship in Him as in no other. There was in Him—in that Man, not only the revelation—the perfect expression of all that God is as Father, as Son, and as Spirit in all those wonderful divine relationships and affections, but there was more than that, there was in that Person, that same blessed Man, the perfect setting forth of sonship—that is, of what man is in relation to God; man in the knowledge of God; man walking in all the light of what God is; perfectly answering to it, the Object of the Father's affection, and the One too in whom responsive affection is fully set forth. I am not drawing your attention to anything new; it has often been said that whenever the Lord addresses God, whether in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, it is never under the name of God; the only instance of that is on the cross where He was making atonement—where it was a question of meeting the claims and maintaining the rights of God as such, sin being in question, but apart

from that it is always "Father." God, as God, may speak of responsibility—of judgment, but not the Father. That word is a word of holy and divine affection, a word of grace, beyond all human thought. He always said Father; He ever walked in the sense of that relationship with God. In Hebrews i. we have: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Was not that made good? How He walked in all the light, and peace, and joy of it! There was in His blessed heart, as Man, an unvarying response to all the Father's love, and to all the peace, all the joy of it. Peace and joy form the atmosphere in which that blessed name of Father is known, and in all the unclouded light of the Father's love, and all the peace and joy that belongs to it, He walked as man down here.

I have quoted it, but I will quote just once more, John i. 14. It says: "And we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth." As it has often been said, He found nothing in manhood. Though truly a man, manhood never contributed to Him. He brought everything into manhood, as a divine Person taking His place in manhood, the distinguishing glory of His manhood derived from what belonged to Him as a divine Person in the Godhead in relationship with the Father.

Now that is sonship. Sonship is an integral part of Christianity. Sonship is not presented as a privilege dependent upon spiritual attainment on the part of Christians; it belongs to the wonderful revelation of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God—it is set forth in Him. It is as wide as redemption is. (See Gal. i. 16.) "To reveal his Son in me, that I may announce him as glad tidings among the nations." All that is set forth in Him (as another has said) is for every man—righteousness, life, sonship. God has no other thought for man, save what is set forth in *that* Man. Hence the Son of God is preached, and what is set forth in Him is God's mind for every man. But I go further. In speaking of those who believe, I can say, "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus." There is no other position now for Christians—it belongs to Christianity; the place of sons is given to us and no other,

I think all would readily admit that the highest unfolding of the truth of Christianity is found in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Did you ever take account of that expression in connection with the prayer of the apostle, beginning with chapter i. 15? He prays for three things—the first is, that we might know what is the hope of the calling of God (he addresses "God and Father," not "Father and

God." In Ephesians we are not in John, we are in Paul, and so it is the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"); then the second thing he prays for is that we might know what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; but look at the third—that we may know what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards *us*. Is that to a few Christians?—a few that might be taken account of as "young men" or "fathers"? (1 John ii.) No, it is "towards *us who believe*." Is not that lovely? I want to cheer you to-night, and I pray that the Spirit of God may give the answer in your soul to what is really true of you—that you are one of the sons of God. There is nothing else—nothing lower for you. Would I make light of the Spirit's work in us—would I make light of spiritual attainment? God forbid. I take *great* account of the distinctions in 1 John ii., between the children, the young men, and the fathers; the fathers are characterised as those who have known Him from the beginning. That is the result of the Spirit's work, but, beloved, you *are* one of God's sons. Do not look within to learn what sonship is; look at the Son of God—look at *that Man*, and then take account of yourself as one of God's sons. "We are all the sons of God by" what?—by experience, by attainment?

Oh no, it is "by faith in Christ Jesus." Have you faith in Him? Well, He is the Son of God, and He is the measure of everything in Christianity. If we speak about the Spirit's work, let me say the work of the Spirit of God in you and in me does not proceed on the ground of speculation, or of questioning or of doubting. Do you say, "I would like to know what it is to be in the good of sonship"? Are you sure that you would like that? Well, let me tell you then that there is One who desires it for you more than you do. He wants you to be in the good of it. But the Spirit of God is not going to work in your soul or in mine on the ground of unbelief. He works on the ground of *faith*—on the ground of our believing. Now let me ask, is it clear to you tonight that you are one of the sons of God? If sonship belongs to you, all the blessedness of it, whatever is connected with it, whatever attaches to it, belongs to you. What was the gospel Paul preached in Acts ix.? "And straightway . . . he preached *Jesus, that he is the Son of God.*" That was the first note of it, and Paul never preached below that; he might emphasise this official title, or that, with regard to this wonderful work, but the first note of it was that *Jesus is the Son of God.*

Then, as we read just now, in Galatians i., he speaks of his own experience, how it pleased

God to separate him from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace, to *reveal His Son* in him. God did that. God revealed His Son, that is not the Father revealing His only-begotten Son, who is in the Father's bosom; but God, as God, revealed His Son—God's Son, in the apostle; and what for? "That I may announce him as glad tidings among the nations." That was the gospel that had been announced in Galatia; the glad tidings announced to them were the glad tidings that Jesus is the Son of God. A Man? Yes; but oh, another kind of Man: a Man, beloved, that lived in the sense, not only of relationship—so that, as Man here, He could speak of God always as His Father—but He ever lived in the sense of the Father's love, and there was in Him a full response to that love.

Well now, we are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus; and what does that involve? Why, that you are in such a relationship with God, that you so know God, that your whole being is lit up with the light of God, and that in your heart there is response to that love. The "sons" speak a language of their own; they speak one language, a language common to the sons—"Abba, Father." Do *you* speak it? "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"; we are apt to take that out of its context, and connect it with our

responsible life in flesh, but it goes right on, "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "Abba, Father" is the response from a heart that knows God as Father, and knows all that wonderful love that fills the Father's heart and is responsive to it. *That is sonship.* Hence, you see, the difference between Galatians and Ephesians; it is not that there is one truth of sonship in Galatians and another truth of it in Ephesians—it is the same truth of sonship in Galatians as in Ephesians; the difference is not in the truth, but in the way the Spirit of God applies the truth. The Galatians had had a good start; the right kind of gospel had been preached to them, the best preached gospel that ever was preached—that Jesus is the Son of God, and they had got the Spirit; they had had a fine start; but something had happened since; those Judaising teachers had got in among them, and they were thereby hindered spiritually, they were taken up with that which is of the world—with "beggarly elements," and what else? With the flesh. These go together; and in turning aside from the gospel, and from what properly belongs to sonship, they had turned aside to the "beggarly elements" of the world, and to a religious revival of the flesh; and now the Spirit of

God through the apostle uses the truth of sonship to recover them, and to deliver them completely from all that under the power of which they had fallen . . . . and how wonderfully he uses the truth to recover them. The leaven of Galatianism, which was introduced in Galatia, has been among the saints of God from that day to this. So the Spirit of God brings in the truth of sonship to recover them, and He tells them, "Ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And that is not all; He tells them that they were not only the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, but because they are sons God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts. Do you know what really recovers people in this present day? Do you know what delivers the saints from everything that is of the character of Galatianism? It is their waking up to the truth not only of what they *are*, but of what they *have got*. He says, "Ye are all the sons of God"; and when did they come into that? When they believed on the Son of God; when they believed the gospel that came to them; and then because they were sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. No wonder the apostle felt so keenly about them! How the enemy had come in through these Judaisers!—had really bewitched them and hindered them, when they

might have been going on in all the joy and in all the freedom, in all the heavenly freedom of sonship!

Well, we may say a little more about the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man here, as the Son of God: what do you find? Why, you find He is the heavenly Man; He is the second Man out of heaven; and so His connections were not with anything here; His connections were in heaven even while He was here; and so, beloved, as sons of God we are not connected with Jerusalem here. Jerusalem above, which is free, is our mother. What would have been the use of those men coming from Jerusalem to Galatia and talking to the saints there about circumcision or keeping the law if they had been in the light and the good of sonship? What is the use of telling me that I ought to join this or that down here if I am in the light of sonship? I do not want to join anything.

What a wonderful thing it is to be in the faith of the gospel that Jesus is the Son of God! We receive adoption or sonship on the ground of redemption, but we receive it as gift from God, a gift which is nothing short of sonship! If you were not a son, you would not be in accord with the Lord Jesus Christ—the Son of God: you would not be in agreement with Him, there would be disparity on your part;

but there is none; He is the heavenly One, and He will always be the heavenly One; and we are heavenly ones. Is He the Son of God? We are all sons of God with Him. Did He as a Man live in the unclouded, unsullied consciousness of God's love as Father? He did, and that is your privilege and mine.

I am not opening it out fully; I have not the time to take up its connections, for there are certain connections which come to light in Galatians; you find amongst them new creation. We have to be the subjects of new creation to come into these things. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ (I would say it reverently) did not need new creation. That "holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God," but we come in on the ground of redemption, and in us sonship involves new creation, and that is the only thing that counts; circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing.

Now there is the same blessed truth of sonship in Ephesians, but it does not regard any present or actual spiritual condition on the part of the saints. Sonship in Ephesians is presented in the full light of all the purpose of God, and not only presented in the full light, but presented in connection with the full scope of those purposes of God . . . . that is why I read those verses: "Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love: having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself." Eph. i. 3–5.) Sonship there comes out in the most marvellous way—in the largest way: marked us out beforehand for sonship; it goes back before your history, back before the entire history of man in responsibility. I have no doubt that it is in the light of this that you have it in Proverbs viii., although, of course, there it is anticipative, but there it is.

Now all this blessed light is brought to bear upon us, and I would that we might take account of sonship in this connection, because it sets the soul in such a large place, it sets you in the holy freedom of sonship, not simply, as in Galatians, to deliver you from Judaism, or the beggarly elements of the world, or the flesh in a religious way, but it is brought to bear on your soul to set you before God in all the greatness, the magnificence and largeness of the purposes of God. It looks on in Ephesians to the age to come, it looks on to that wonderful day of display; but it is the light of it now, the largeness of it now, filling our souls. . . . Do not take it up doctrinally. God would have

you to be in the good of it, in the good of what we *are*, and God would set us in the present light, and love, and heavenly liberty of it all, and in that way the Lord would maintain us here, and we should prove, not simply what comes to light in Galatians, as setting us free, as delivering us from everything and anything the enemy would bring in (the man in the flesh, or any connection with the beggarly elements of this world), but the Lord would make it good in us in connection with that which is heavenly, with all that is divine, and with all that is eternal. It is an anticipation, of course, of what we shall be in the actuality of—but the blessed thing is, God has brought it before us in all this wonderful way that we might be in the reality of sonship *even now*.

I trust the Lord may interest our *hearts* in it vitally—not merely our minds. May He engage our *hearts* in all the present light of it for His name's sake!

THE BLESSING OF ETERNAL LIFE.

(John xvii. 1–3.)

The Spirit, beloved friends, of the Lord Jesus had reached the very end of His sojourn here; it is in this chapter that, speaking to the Father, He says: "I am no longer in the world. . . . I come to thee." Not only has His public ministry and all His connection with the people closed, as we know in chapter xii., but from that point the Lord is seen exclusively in the company of His own and occupied with them; there has been the passover supper and what we speak of as the Lord's supper (though it is not brought to light in John) in that upper room, and the Lord has washed the disciples' feet, and has spoken to them in a very wonderful way. We have what is recorded in chapters xiii., xiv., xv. and xvi. of John's gospel. He has no more to say directly to His own, and now just before they leave that upper room and start across the brook for the garden of Gethsemane the Lord turns to the Father; and here, though He is not speaking, as we have said, to His disciples, He speaks to the Father in their presence,

they are privileged to listen while He pours out His heart to the Father; so that I have no doubt the Lord intended, not only those who personally surrounded Him at that moment to hear what He said to the Father, but He intended that *we* should hear it. The very fact of the Spirit of God having put these wonderful words on record is proof that the Lord intended that we should hear them, and I have no doubt, beloved, that He intended that we should understand them, and that our hearts should be greatly impressed by them. What a wonderful privilege for us as Christians here together to be thus permitted to take account of these utterances from the lips of the Lord Jesus! It seems to me the very fact that He addresses the Father gives a peculiar, a unique significance and importance to His words. I cannot conceive that anything could be of greater importance for us as Christians than to know the very heart of the Lord Jesus and to know the desires of His heart as poured out to His Father, and I trust there is desire in our hearts at this time that we may not only know what the heart of the Lord Jesus is, but that we may really desire to respond to His heart.

The opening words—not yet His own utterance, but the words of the Spirit of God, as recorded for us, are significant: we are apt to

read lightly or carelessly; our poor minds are not always under the direct power of the Spirit of God; we have our life and interests here, and these things occupy our minds too much, but let me just call your attention in a very simple way to the beginning of the chapter: "*These words spake Jesus.*" . . . We often sing, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," and the heart does delight in the music of that precious name.

We must not forget that we are speaking from the Gospel of John. At the close of the gospel—chapter xx. (chapter xxi., though just as much inspired as any other chapter, is in the nature of an appendix), referring to the signs, of which there are seven recorded in the book, the Apostle John says, "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name." The Spirit brings Jesus before us in the Gospel of John as the Christ and as the Son of God. It might perhaps be said that as the Christ it brings Him before us in a certain official way, in connection with His wonderful office and character as Messias, Christ, anointed Man, God's Messias, God's Christ, God's anointed Man; but when it adds "the Son of God" I think it brings Him personally before us as a Man in relation to God. . . . "Son of man" (and

that is personal too) speaks of Him as a Man in relation to *man*, but as "Son of God"—while He is still a Man, it is His relation to *God;* that Man is God's Son. I want to bring this before your souls, because I think it is very important that we should see that in this wonderful outpouring of His heart to the Father, the Lord is speaking as a Man. You will understand, I trust, there is no question in our mind with regard to His being a divine Person; I love to think of chapter i. 18, it is such a wonderful testimony to His glory as a divine Person in the Godhead: "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Well, He was ever that, never less than that; He could not be (may I say it reverently) more than that, and He was never less than that; but still, here in chapter xvii., He is speaking to the Father as a Man, and He says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." Now, as a divine Person, how could He ask to be glorified? As a divine Person He is God equally with the Father and with the eternal Spirit; nothing could be given Him as a divine Person, because as a divine Person everything was His necessarily; but He says, "Father, glorify thy Son"; He asks the Father to glorify Him *as a Man.* It is true

He was entitled to it, but the wonderful thing in John is that He will receive nothing, except from the hands of the Father; so He says, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." From the very first step of His path here to the last step His heart had been set on the glory of the Father, as He says a little further down, "I have glorified thee on the earth." . . . He had come forth from the Father and had come into the world, and He was now about to leave the world and return to the Father; but, beloved, He is just as much set upon glorifying the Father now that He is glorified by the Father, as He was in the days of His flesh down here; so He says, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." Then He continues: "As thou hast given him authority over all flesh"—and the word means more than authority, it means one who has the right and title as well as the power. The Lord in His death has established His right and claim, though He speaks of it as given to Him of the Father, and that is in perfect keeping with this gospel. Has He not by the grace of God "tasted death for everything"? Did He not give Himself a ransom for all? Has He not died for all? Yes, He has; and He has the right, title and claim, based upon that wonderful death, yet He attributes it to the Father. He says, "As

thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal"—not to everybody, it is to "all thou hast given to him"; it is in principle, I might say, what answers to Matthew xiii. He buys the field, but it is in view of the treasure hidden in the field, and so He has got power over all flesh, but it is in view of giving eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him.

Now I am coming to my present point. I am going to attempt to shew from scripture what eternal life is. You may say it is a bold attempt. I do not know that we should think so; surely we may well believe what the Lord says, and He tells us what it is. He says: "This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." You may hear even God's people sometimes talking about what they *feel*, or what they are trying to *do*, or what they are aiming to be, but that is not it. "This is the eternal life, that they should *know thee, the only true God*." No doubt that personal pronoun—"thee" goes back to the word "Father" in the first verse. He is speaking to the Father as such, and that word "thee" stands for the Father, who is "the only true God." If we speak of divine Persons in distinction we may speak of the Father, of the Son, and of the

Holy Ghost. Christian baptism is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; but note the expression, "the only true God." It is not here a question of distinction between divine Persons in the Godhead; the Son, of course, speaks to the Father in the consciousness of His own relationship with Him, but as regards men generally He is "the only true God"; it is a question of the manner or character in which God has been pleased to reveal Himself. Referring for a moment again to chapter i. 18, it begins: "No one hath seen God at any time," then it goes on, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father"; that distinguishes Him as a divine Person in the Godhead, distinguishes Him from the Father. He is said to be in the bosom of the Father, hence the One who is in the Father's bosom is viewed in distinction from the Father in whose bosom He is. But it is not that here. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Who has He declared? He has declared *God*, and if He, as Man, has declared God, He has declared God according to the relationship in which He stands to the Father in the Godhead, but also according to the relationship in which He stands *as Man* here to the *God* whom He has declared; so He

says: "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and *Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*"

I would like to endeavour, for a few moments, to speak very simply and as plainly as the Lord may enable me, about eternal life—what it is. It is the knowledge of the Father *as the only true God*, and it is the knowledge of Jesus Christ—that blessed Man, who is ever viewed in this gospel as a Man here, the One sent of the Father. The word for "know" here (I add a word, because I understand there are three Greek words translated as "know" in our authorised version) is not the word which expresses "consciousness," but it is the word which expresses certain objective knowledge. For instance—"I know whom I have believed"; there is implied there a certain intimate acquaintance with the person. So here: "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Now the difference between Paul and John is this—Paul always speaks of "God and Father," but John speaks of "Father and God." It is just the difference between the two sides of the truth, and characteristic of the ministry of each respectively. For instance, take 1 Corinthians viii.; it says, speaking of the heathen: "For and if indeed there are those

called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are gods many, and lords many), yet to us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ." As has often been said, it is not a question there of the divinity or the true deity of the Lord Jesus as such, it is a question of the wonderful way in which God has come out in the revelation of Himself, and the relative position taken by God on the one hand (the Father), and the Lord Jesus Christ on the other hand—there is one God, even the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. Now that is the truth here, only John reverses Paul's order, or you may say Paul reverses John's order. Paul, as we have said, speaks of God and Father: John of Father and God. Here it is the Son of God, and it is the One of whom God said when He was born in this world, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," and so in John the Father comes first always. Take the language of the Lord in John xx., in the message He sent through Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." So that eternal life (let me repeat it again) is the knowledge of the *Father* as the only true *God*, and it is the *knowledge of Jesus Christ the sent One* of the Father; it is not the knowledge of divine Persons as such in their relationship to each

other as in the Godhead. I have always had a difficulty in my mind with regard to statements of that kind, and we have the words of the Lord Himself in Matthew xi., where He says, without any qualification: "No one knows the Son but the Father"; and what do you and I know of divine Persons as such in their relationships to each other in the Godhead? We know what has been brought out in revelation in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; we know there is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the Godhead, but the Lord says (we refer again to Matthew xi.), "nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him." How can He say that of the Father? Because it is the Son who has come into incarnation, and it is in the Son incarnate that the Father is revealed and made known. Again, in John x. 14, the Lord says: "I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father." Do not think, beloved, that these precious words bring you and me into Godhead. Do not think even that it brings us into that circle of knowledge subsisting between divine Persons as such in the Godhead. It *does* bring us into a marvellous circle—we are brought into the circle of knowing the Father as *that Man*—the

Son of God—knows Him, and we know that Son of God, that *wonderful Man*, as the Father knows Him. What a marvellous circle! That is eternal life. It is the knowledge of the Father as the only true God, but it is more than that, it is the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Father's sent One. Why? Because in Jesus Christ as the Father's sent One you have not only the light of the perfect declaration of God, the perfect revelation of God in Him, as Man, but you have *more* than that, you have the perfect answer to it in Him as Man.

Now I apprehend, beloved (it is a very interesting point, though I can only just mention it, and it is peculiar to John), that salvation in John is a consequence of eternal life—that is, *salvation from the order of things here*. Let me give you a very well-known passage, John x. 9; "I am the door: if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture." What do you enter into when you enter in by Him as the door? I should say that you enter into *the sphere* of *eternal life*. You enter into the knowledge of the Father as the only true God, and more, you enter into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the sent One. I have not time to prove it by many quotations from John's writings, but you will find it to be so; salvation in the gospel of John follows in the train of eternal life. I think

our brother Mr. Raven said, as it has often been said as to the gospel, that salvation follows in the train of righteousness. Well, that is true; but in John's gospel salvation follows in the train of eternal life. Take chapter iii. 14, 15, the Lord's allusion to the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one who believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal." Then verse 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal." Not a word about salvation yet, but now read verse 17: "For God has not sent his Son into the world that he may judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him." It is not a strange doctrine to scripture that salvation is the result of knowing God. There is a sort of intimation of it in the conversation of the Lord with the woman at the well in chapter iv. He said: "Ye worship ye know not what." There was no true knowledge of God; what did their whole system of worship amount to? Nothing. It had no basis. Then He says: "We worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews." There was the true knowledge of God there, hence there was salvation there. Take the Old Testament scriptures, Psalm xxvii.: "Jehovah is my

light and my salvation"; it is not that I am going to reach Jehovah as the *result* of light and salvation, but Jehovah *is* my light and my salvation. Salvation lies in the knowledge of God; it is as you come to know God that you enter into all the blessed results and consequences of knowing God. So with regard to eternal life, what you find in John's gospel is—that those who have eternal life "shall not perish." The perishing is not future, but *here* and *now*. Eternal life guarantees you against perishing *here*.

Well now, that is how these things are put in John's gospel; but before I pass on to those who receive eternal life and what is involved in it I would like to speak a word about the Giver. In the passage immediately before us the Lord Jesus is the Giver—"that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal"; so in chapter x. 28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand," the Lord Jesus as the Son of God gives it, and yet God gives it. Take 1 John v. 11: "This is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life"; then he adds, "and this life is in his Son." "He that has the Son has life." God primarily is the Giver o eternal life, but He does not give it apart from Christ; and speaking again of Christ as the

Son of God, He is said in Romans v. 21 and vi. 23 to be the Giver of eternal life; so that He may be spoken of as the Giver, or the gift may be attributed to God. There is an interesting passage in John iv. in that connection; you remember at the beginning of the conversation, after the Lord had laid the walls of prejudice in that woman's heart flat to the ground, He said, "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"; it is not exactly that the living water is eternal life, it is the Spirit; but it is in view of eternal life, because He says again, "But whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, *springing* up into eternal life." That is how it is presented; it is God's gift, and it is also the gift of the Son of God. He has that distinguishing honour and glory of being the Giver of the living water; you and I may receive it; the living water as such may spring within us, or may flow out from us, as the Lord says in chapter vii.; but nowhere are we said to be the givers of it, we are the recipients of it.

Well now, who receives eternal life? The scripture's answer is this: "Whosoever be-

lieveth in him." I apprehend there has been a mistake as to this: people have asserted that because they have believed they have got it. One thing is very certain, that if you have never believed, you have not got it, that is very clear; it is perfectly true that none but those who believe get it; that is, the believer is the kind of person who gets it, and if you are a believer, you have a right—a title to it. I admit that gladly, but let me say, we have got very loose ideas about believers in these days; a believer, as spoken of in the Gospel of John, is one who *believes on the name of the only-begotten Son of God.* If you read the Epistle of John you are bound to own the distinctions—"whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God"; but what about the man that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?—"This is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith. Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" I just want to say this, lest we should be carried away with taking up scriptural expressions loosely; in the Gospel of John a believer is one who believes in that Person who is none other than the only-begotten Son of God. Of Him as born in time God said, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." It was of that One that the angel

Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God." Such a Man this world had never seen, had never known; He was the "Second Man out of heaven."

Now it is the one who believes on the name of that Man who is the only-begotten Son—the one who has the faith of the Son of God, he is the one who has title to eternal life, he is the one who gets it. How does he get it? What is the great gain of believing on the only-begotten Son of God? It is to get the Holy Ghost. "This he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." (Chap. vii. 39.) The Lord there anticipates Pentecost. That is the next step.

But we were speaking of how we get eternal life. We have light, and, I say, loose thoughts about this, because we do not give the blessed Spirit of God His place. It is not enough to have received the Spirit; we must give Him place. See what the Lord says about the living water. Speaking generally, we may say that the living water is the Spirit, but it is the Spirit in that special character; so He says, "The water which I shall give him shall become

in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life." Then see Paul's language in the Epistle to the Galatians: "for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life." Every intelligent Christian would surely own they have the flesh in them: "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; but having the flesh in me *need* not issue in corruption; it is he that *soweth* to the flesh shall of his own flesh reap corruption. But now see the other side: "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." There is not only the indwelling of the Spirit of God, we must leave room for the blessed *activities* of the Spirit of God. And that is how the believer comes into the present good of eternal life. I am speaking of eternal life as a present blessing. I know there are scriptures about it in connection with the future. We read of the hope of eternal life, but we are speaking now from John, and John speaks of the present gift of it and the present title to it, and the present good of it in connection with the activities of the Holy Spirit. That leads me to the next point—what is *involved* in it, I mean in the *present* possession of it. There has been such a way (and we

have suffered immensely from it) of assuming that because I am a believer I have got it; but the fact is, while we have loudly asserted our possession of eternal life, we have hardly been able to tell what it is, or to give any account of it. Generally speaking, if people claim to possess things, they are supposed to know something about the things they possess.

Well now, I want to speak of what is involved in eternal life. I want to speak most simply. Of course, you will understand that to begin with "you must be born anew." You could not speak of any one having eternal life who had not been born anew, that is going far back. "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God"; he can have no spiritual perception of it, no understanding or apprehension of it. The first thing then is that you are born anew. The next is that you have got faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—the faith of the gospel, that He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. To revert again to John—you have got the faith of that Person, the Son of God. "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." You have received the Spirit. But what does that involve? I want to shew you that after the reception of the Spirit there are the *activities* of the Spirit. There is the

springing up; or, to change the figure, turn to Galatians vi., where there is the figure of the sowing and reaping. Now you know that in the figure a great deal takes place between sowing the grain and reaping it, there is the germination down in the ground, which you do not see; then you begin to see the little green shoot coming up from the ground, and you may take account of its subsequent growth, there are all the stages of the growth on to the reaping. The sowing and the reaping are *here* and *now*. We may be in the good of eternal life *now*. May we not know the Father—the only true God? May we not know Jesus Christ as the sent One? Who could surrender that? But I want to shew you now what is involved in these blessed *activities* of the Spirit. In Romans vi. towards the close we read: "But now, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life." If you are a believer on the Son of God no one can question your title, but what about *the present enjoyment of it?* People want to read a whole lot of time into that word—"end"; but it is not time, it is moral order. So again referring once more to the first Epistle of John, what characterises the man that believes that Jesus is the Son of God is that he has got the *victory over the world*. The world, alas! has got the

victory over many, but in that man's case the scales are turned, he is not under the power of the world, he has *got the victory over the world.* We need to contend for the reality of things. That is what is involved in it. I would not discourage you, beloved, I would that I might be enabled to encourage you, but I would not encourage you in anything that is not scriptural. Have you got the faith? Has God given you His Spirit? Well, you are *on the way.* But are there now within you the blessed activities of the Spirit? Are you in the *present* good and light and joy of eternal life? John says, in the beginning of his epistle, "These things write we unto you," not to make you unhappy, but "that your joy may be full." If you want the fulness of joy you may have it; it is all in eternal life; there is not a cloud there; you might be poor or rich; eternal life knows nothing of these things; the very things that naturally we seek to avoid and evade are sometimes very suitable conditions for our realisation of it in all its blessedness.

I only have one more word to say. I have just one more point to touch on. I cannot enlarge on it, but just a word as to the *sphere* of eternal life. The blessing itself, involving as it does an entirely new order of things, lies outside of everything here; it is beyond death, in the resurrection sphere. It is a faith-

sphere "over Jordan" (as we sometimes say). That is the sphere of it, and as we experimentally reach that sphere in our souls we enter into and enjoy it in the power of the Spirit. "The water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life."

But while this is so, yet it is a blessing that belongs to us while we are *on earth* as being in a scene where sin and death are, and in which lawlessness and idolatry prevail on every hand, and outside all this eternal life is to be enjoyed *here* and *now*. Thus for Christians it belongs more to the present than to the future. I do not say that we shall lose it when we go to heaven. We shall not lose then any blessing that we have here; but the term—eternal life—will have no force in heaven. It is for the present it is given to us, and it is while we are on earth that we are in the enjoyment of it.

It is important and helpful to distinguish the blessing of eternal life from the calling of sonship. The latter belongs to heaven, and for the full enjoyment of it we must go to heaven. We have the light of it now, and we have received the spirit of it by which we may taste the blessedness of it; but still we await the actuality of it, and this will be when we go to heaven.

I do not mean to convey in *any* way that

eternal life is earthly, but only that scripture connects the blessing with us as on earth. Eternal life is not a blessing distinctive of Christianity, for Israel will have it in the age to come. The "righteous" in Matthew xxv. "go away into life eternal."

Well, I have overstepped the time. May the Lord stir up our hearts, beloved. Have you the knowledge that we have spoken of—the knowledge of the Father as the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, the Father's sent One? "*This* is life eternal—to know thee—the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

THE HOUSE OF GOD.

"CONSIDER YOUR WAYS"

(HAGGAI I., II.)

ACCORDING to the positive statement of the Spirit of God in chapter xv. of the Epistle to the Romans, these prophecies by Haggai were written for our instruction. We are told there that "as many things as have been written before" (that really covers all the Old Testament scriptures) "have been written for our instruction"; and I am satisfied, beloved brethren, that there is very important and much-needed instruction for us in this Book of Haggai the prophet. I think the circumstances in which the earthly people of God were at the time of Haggai's prophecies are similar to those which surround us at the present time; or we might put it the other way and say, that the circumstances surrounding us at this present time, as God's people, are very similar to those existing at the time of Haggai the prophet.

God had wonderfully interposed in connection with His people: God had almost, as it were, departed from His usual ways; He had stirred

up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, who issued a proclamation to the effect that God had instructed him that he should build the house of God at Jerusalem, and he sent out the proclamation inviting a response. And there *was* a response; we are told in the beginning of the Book of Ezra the wonderful response there was. I do not go into the detail; I only want to say that we are told, with regard to those who returned from Babylon at that time, that they went back with the express purpose of building the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and it would seem that at the first they set to work with a good deal of energy and earnestness; they addressed themselves to the work of rebuilding the house, and then after this first, and what we may speak of as a good start, there was a flagging of energy, they lost heart in the interests of Jehovah, they ceased to go on with the building of the house, and, alas! the same thing is characteristic of the people of God at all times, and it is characteristic of us at this time. If we begin to be taken up with our own interests there is a corresponding decline with regard to the interests of God. There was a great opportunity, so to speak, presented to them in connection with their return to Jerusalem to make themselves comfortable, and they seized the opportunity and began to make themselves very

comfortable, they built houses for themselves, wainscoted or cieled, and thus their hearts became set on their own interests and ends, and of course there was a corresponding decline with regard to the interests of Jehovah. We find just the same thing in the New Testament and at the present time. We see it in principle in the Epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle, speaking of sending Timotheus, says, "For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on"; then he adds—"for all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ." It becomes a great test at all times to the people of God; I have no doubt it is a testing point just now, we may have the opportunity within our reach of making ourselves very comfortable here, but if our hearts are set on that, there will be decline with regard to the interests of the house of God.

Well, it is under these circumstances that God raised up the prophet Haggai and began to speak to His people. In the first instance He makes a very touching and yet a very solemn appeal to them. They were saying, the prophet tells us in the opening of this chapter: "These people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." It is wonderful how cleverly people can talk about this and that matter as to the suitable and

unsuitable time for things of the Lord when they get interested in themselves, and have their own interests before them. They then imagine it is not the time to be interested for the Lord, and they do not like to be wakened up. Then came the word of the Lord to Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" What a solemn and yet touching appeal! There was the house of God lying waste, and they were busying themselves with building their own cieled houses, looking after their own comfort and interest.

Now I should like to say, with regard to the house of God, whether then or now, that you have two aspects of it. The one original builder of the house of Jehovah, the temple at Jerusalem, was King Solomon, the son of David. It is true that a certain preparation was made beforehand by David the king, and the Spirit of God gives him credit for all that he did in the way of gathering together the material; but the Spirit of God always attributes the building of the house to Solomon. Stephen says, "But Solomon built him an house." (Acts vii.) Now in that sense there was no other builder, but as we know from 1 Kings viii., the house built and completed by King Solomon was dedicated to Jehovah, and

Jehovah signified in a wonderful way His appreciation of that house.

Now I would like to make a remark as to the continuity of that house in God's mind. We find it in the gospels—the same house. I imagine that the act of that poor woman in Luke xxi., who cast in her two mites into the treasury, was more pleasing to God than perhaps all that Herod had done in connection with the rebuilding of the temple. So the house is maintained in continuity, and that is why I called your attention to the proper reading of chapter ii. 9. In the authorised version it reads: "The glory of this latter house," &c., but it should read: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than that of the former." There is only one house in God's mind.

But I want to bring before you the fact that the house had lapsed into a ruined condition, and the time had come in the ways of God, and He stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to have the house built again. I do not mean in the sense that Solomon built it; as I have said, there was only one builder in that sense; but it was to be set up again, it was to be brought out of that waste condition in which it was lying so that all that God connected with it might be established: all the thoughts of God, whether in connection with His own glory or with the blessing of His own people,

or still further with the outgoing of blessing—because while in a sense it was Jewish, God never limited it to the Jews; for instance, when the Lord went into the temple, as recorded in Mark xi., He quoted the scripture: "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?" In God's purpose there was always a group of nations around Israel, and God had blessing in view for all the nations in connection with that house. Now I think without any argument we might simply look at it as a fact. Not only Zerubbabel (Zerubbabel was governor of Judah at the time) and Joshua, who was the high priest, but the whole of the remnant had the wonderful privilege of building up that house; they had gone back for that ostensible purpose, but there had come in a decline, and they had been betrayed into this decline by a spirit of selfishness; they were occupied with their own ends, and the house of God was allowed to lie in this waste condition. What answers to this at the present time? There is the house of God, and just as of that material structure in the city of Jerusalem Solomon alone was the builder, so the Lord Jesus Christ is alone the builder of the house of God. He is the builder because in the Lord Jesus Christ you have the answer to both David and Solomon. In the days of His flesh, while He was here as a Man among men,

He gathered together the material; but that material was put together after the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of God. The house has been built by God, and let me emphasise too the *continuity* of that house, for we have now passed from the types to the antitype; we have passed from that material structure in Jerusalem to that spiritual structure—that wonderful building where Jews and Gentiles are built together for an habitation of God in spirit, or, to use the language of Peter in chapter ii. of his first epistle, "that spiritual house."

But what has taken place? Well, in a sense, there has been an answer to what took place with the children of Israel. Speaking generally, there was something which answered, a number of years ago, to the return of the remnant from Babylon. God wrought, not now through a Cyrus king of Persia, or any king or earthly potentate for that matter, but God was pleased to take up His own vessel or vessels; indeed, one might speak of one particular vessel that He was pleased to take up, and there was inaugurated what really answers spiritually to a return from Babylon. Many beloved people of God were brought out here and there from the systems around them to the principles of His house; they were brought out—to a clearer gospel? Yes, and that is all right so far as it

goes, but they were brought out with reference to the *house of God*. I know the truth of the Head in heaven was *first* seen, and then it was seen that His body must be here, and afterwards the truth as to the house of God came out; and I think in our day, if one might speak soberly, God has been pleased to give a great deal of light with regard to His house, not only with regard to it as a spiritual truth, but in a practical way so that there might be return to the principles of the house of God.

Well, now a word further. I venture to say this, and I beg you to receive it in grace. I think there has been that which answers a good deal to what was the case at the time of Haggai's prophecies. I think there has come in a spirit of selfishness, and the days in which our lot has fallen are days of material prosperity, and many advantages have been brought before the people of God with regard to advancing their interests here, and more or less there has been decline, so that at the present time I believe God is speaking in a very solemn way to us as His people, very much as He did through Haggai to the returning remnant from Babylon in his day—speaking to us with reference to the house of God. I do not attempt to make very much application, only to bring it before you as the Spirit of God knows just where we are

spiritually, each one of us, so that the Spirit of God might use the appeal. I do not care to use it on you, and I do not know that you would care to use it on me, but I would like to leave it with you and just to say that I believe the Spirit of God would bring it home to each one of us, so that there might be on our part what answers to verse 12. We find—"Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord." That is to say, there was an answer to the appeal, not only on the part of the leaders, the governor and the high priest, but on the part of the whole remnant. It says: "with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet."

I think we are too much in the habit (and so far it is right) of dwelling exclusively upon the one side of the truth of the house as built by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that many of us have used the truth of the house of God in that sense like a pillow to lie down and repose on, with the comforting thought that we are in and of the house of God, and that we are there as the Lord indicates, as sons (the son abides in the

house for ever, he cannot have his wages paid at any time and be turned off as a servant). I fear that many of us have dwelt upon that side *exclusively*, and with the effect of its producing indifference. So I have a little difficulty in attempting to bring before you what this prophecy seems to emphasise—that is, *our* part in connection with the house of God.

Now, before going further, I should like to say this—from the very first time that God had a house here in this world you will find that the truth of the house of God became a touchstone and a test of the condition of His people. For instance, we find decline and we find revival—revival after revival—in the history of God's earthly people, and you will always find this, that when there was a decline that decline was marked by neglect of the house of God, and when there was a revival that revival was marked by a profound interest in and exercise with regard to the house of God. I might instance, perhaps, that last and most wonderful revival in the days of Josiah. The house of God was in a dreadful condition; all manner of rubbish had accumulated there, and you remember how Hilkiah (the father of Jeremiah), the high priest, in connection with removing the rubbish from the house of God discovered the Book of Moses (2 Kings xxii. 8)—the book containing the mind of God, and it

was put into the hands of Shaphan the scribe, who carried it to the king, and it was read in the presence of the king. I only speak of it as emphasising this fact, that there was a wonderful revival, and that revival had its beginning in the interest which there was in the heart of the young king with regard to the house of God. He seemed to wake up to the fact that God's house was not what it should be, and in connection with this the book was found which contained the mind of God, and it became the occasion of a wonderful turning to God on the part of the people of God.

Now that was so then, and it has always been so. We find it with regard to the blessed Lord when He was here. Of Him you know it had been written in one of the psalms, and the disciples were able later on to recall it to their memory, in connection with the Lord's action, when He went into the temple (John ii.), how it was written concerning Him, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." When the Lord was here He took up every interest of God, and there was a perfect answer in Him to the mind of God. I have already alluded to that action of the widow woman. (Luke xxi.) I do not suppose it attracted any public attention, but the Lord Jesus Christ saw it, it came under His eye. He took great account of it

and He declared that she had put in more than they all. So you see how the house of God became a test; if there was spiritual decline that decline was manifested in neglect of the house of God, and if on the other hand there was a work of God—if there was anything like what would lead to a revival, there was great interest taken in the house of God.

Hence, I think it is a touchstone at this present time: it is a great test for us, we might well put the question to ourselves and to one another: "What is your interest in the house of God?" Are you so concerned about the house of God and that there should be among us that which would answer to going up into the mountain and getting the wood and building the house? (Hag. i. 8.) This work was not official; it was common to all the remnant at that time; the word of the Lord to them was, "Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house." It was Jehovah's house then, and God's house now is the "assembly of the living God." We have nothing in scripture about little models or reproductions of it, it is the house of God. It is true that the remnant in Haggai's time were only a little handful come back from Babylon, but that was for God's house; and the handful were interested in the house of God; and it is a great question for us—how far are

we interested in the condition of the house of God? how far is there in any of us that spiritual energy in regard to it so that there is getting the right material so to speak, and building it up?

I should like to call your attention to the encouragement the Lord gives them. He appeals to them; He says, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little." Of course *we* have to take this up in a spiritual way. There may be great activities which do not come to much. You may see people busying themselves in various directions; and the people in Haggai's time *had* busied themselves; they had sown, they had eaten, they had drunk, they had clothed themselves, had earned wages, there were all these activities, but it had amounted to nothing—the Lord says, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." There was no satisfaction in that! I hope you will bear with me, and not misunderstand me. I am often asked the question what about this and that; what about Sunday schools, etc. But I say, have you got satisfaction, spiritual satisfaction? It is no use going on with bustle and stir in religious activities merely to keep

going. When we turn to the Lord as to it He lets the light in; He says, "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." There is no premium upon laziness, but what is the use of going on with an endless round of religious activities when the house of God lies waste? God withholds blessing from His own people sometimes because they are wholly concerned and occupied with their own activities. You know a person may be very religious, very active, and may bustle and stir in a religious way and yet have no concern for the house of God. It is goodness of God not to let you find anything in this way; He withholds blessing, and there is the sense of disappointment, dissatisfaction steals over your spirit and it is good that God allows it.

Well now, I want to go back to the first point, because there is wonderful encouragement in it: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house." There is not only the suitable material but there is the suitable place where the suitable material can alone be found. The house of God was not built with wood that was found in the valleys or by the river-side; it was in those mountain

heights—in those high altitudes that the material was found. I am sure there is a word for us in that. The house of God is not composed of earthly material, it is composed of heavenly material. The house was built here, but if I might be bold enough to say it, it was built from heaven and of heavenly material. It was the Holy Ghost who came down from Christ in glory that put the house together; and God has not changed His mind about the material that is to enter into the practical building of His house, for although it is not building it in the sense that Christ builds the house, it is building it in perfect *keeping* with that; it is the practical building of it. Jude says, "Building up yourselves in your most holy faith." It is that side of things. There is the earnest seeking and desire to promote in our souls and in the souls of each other that which comports with the heavenly character of the house of God; you go up into the mountains. It requires some energy to go up into a mountain, and there must be *spiritual* energy. But I say that only by the way: I pass on to what I wanted to draw your attention to. God says, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." It is your privilege and mine to contribute to that which gives

pleasure to God. There is nothing outward about Philadelphia (Rev. iii.), but in the message to Philadelphia the Lord says, "*I know thy works.*" How that ought to stir us up; how it ought to animate our souls! And so Jehovah says to the remnant, "I will take pleasure in it." It is not only that God will take pleasure in it now, but in connection with the building up of the house of God it will be for the pleasure and glory of God for ever. How wonderful! How the honours of this world, the approval or disapproval of man, how it all sinks into utter insignificance, it really is not worth our consideration for a moment in the light of this.

You will find the answer to it in verse 12, and in verse 13 we read: "Then spake Haggai Jehovah's messenger in Jehovah's message unto the people, saying, *I am with you*, saith Jehovah." What has made the difference? There was a kind of distance between God and the people in the beginning of the prophecy—He has to expostulate with them, and has really withheld His blessing from them, but the moment there is an answer to His appeal to them, Jehovah sends a special message through Haggai and says: "*I am with you.*" We ought not to be content to rest short of that. I am sure I should be very sorry to say a word that would encourage pretension in any

shape or form among the people of God, but do you not think there is danger on the other side of the question, and that we are ready, so to speak, to give up? We ought not to give up; He says: "*I am with you.*" You remember when Moses came down from the mount and found that Israel had made a golden calf, he said to Jehovah: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence . . . wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest *with* us?" I know it is a day of ruin and failure, but there is such a thing as being unduly occupied with the ruin and the failure: we ought not to be content to go on in a day like this without the blessed sense of His presence.

Then we get in verse 14 the going on of the work: "And they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts"; and then there are further communications, and a little later on comes the appeal of the Lord to the prophet, "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong,

O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." (Chap. ii. 2-4.)

You know elsewhere we get a very touching account of the scene that took place when this building was completed; some wept and some shouted; there were these various feelings; the older ones who recollected, as it were, what that house was in her first and pristine glory, they could but weep; others shouted. Yet here is the wonderful word again, "Yet now be strong, all ye people of the land . . . . for *I am with you*, saith the Lord of hosts."

If you are not working on the line of the house of God, God will not help you, He will not encourage you. He will not say: "I am with you," He will not bid you "be strong."

Every thought of God is linked with the house of God. His glory is there . . . and when you come to the habitable world to come all the wonderful things that are embraced within the wide range of the purpose of God are linked up with that house, so that if I am really building in connection with the house of God it is not only that I am promoting so far the present spiritual prosperity and blessing of God's people, but I am really working in view of a day that is to come, and that is the principle of the passage here, "Yet now be strong ...

according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." God is able to go back to the very beginning when they came out of Egypt; that is to say, God is prepared to place us now according to the word that He first covenanted with us—He is able to set us now as to our souls, however feeble we may be and however ruined the ordinary condition of things, in the present spiritual *good*—not of some later revelation—but of that which God really set up in the beginning of Christianity in the power of His Spirit. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace."

What a range there is in the thoughts of God! How they reach on into the future when all the ways of God will find their completion and will come out in the most magnificent display in glory in that coming day. The Spirit of God connects everything with Christ.

"The desire of all nations" is Christ. God reaches on to the future in this statement when everything—all that God is interested in now will find its completion in that wonderful day of display: and God would encourage us if we were interested in His house. I repeat there is a good deal said about the ruin and the failure which is true, but, beloved, we must not stop at that; we are privileged to look on to that future day when all will be displayed in glory, and if we, like Zerubbabel and Joshua, were set for the interests of the house of God, it would so absorb us that we should not have much time to fall out by the way; I am sure of this, that we should get on better with one another if we were occupied with the house of God—with the promotion in a spiritual way of that which is true in connection with God's house. I would that I had more ability to tell it out.

But I want just to touch in a practical way upon one point more, and that is—that as soon as you get interested in connection with the house of God, God will raise the question of *holiness*. He has His own way, and it is for Him to raise it; and you will bear with me if I say that I think at the present time we need to have the question of holiness raised amongst us. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one

bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." All this questioning of the priests has its origin in the mind of God, and you may depend upon it, it expresses the marvellous interest in God's mind in what is connected with the spiritual interest of His people here, and with His own house. So there is a word for us in it and a very practical word. I ask, What are we touching? What about our associations? Are we exercised about them? We cannot maintain practical holiness and not be concerned about what we are touching. Do you think that by touching, that is, having association with people who are in unclean associations that you can impart the sanctity of the holy flesh that may be in the skirt of your garment? If you do think so you are wonderfully mistaken. The priest answered, "*No.*" You will become unclean yourself. Uncleanness can be imparted but holiness cannot be imparted. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Jehovah, for ever."

If we go back to the history of Jacob, when God said to him, "Go up to Bethel and dwell

there," he got a sense of all the holiness that belonged to Bethel and he turned to his household and had a regular clearing-up time. He had an instinctive sense that there were things in his household that would not stand the holiness that belonged to Bethel—the house of God.

I do believe the Lord would speak to us at this time in a very practical way. People are inclined to go here and there, but if you touch the unclean thing in *any* way, instead of your imparting sanctity or help to that unclean thing that unclean thing will impart its uncleanness to you.

It has been a matter of exercise to me to speak to you of these things in a simple way so that there might be spiritual profit, and if the Lord is pleased by His Spirit to bring these things home to us, I am sure that our consideration of them will not be without spiritual profit to each one of us.

DEPARTURE AND RECOVERY.

(Rev. II. 1–7; III. 7–13.)

I THINK in the message to the church at Ephesus we have marked out by the Lord Himself the point of departure, and in the message to Philadelphia we have on the part of the Lord the recognition of the point of recovery, and these are the two thoughts I desire to bring before you on this occasion. It is an immense thing to have the expressed judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no need for any of us to be in any uncertainty with regard to His judgment upon matters at the present time. I do not mean matters pertaining to our responsible life here or to our circumstances, or to ourselves, but matters pertaining to His glory, to that which is in relationship to Himself; that which is the delight and satisfaction of His own heart.

One feels very much at the present time the need of grace from the Lord to rise above every form of selfishness. We are blocked up and hindered by selfishness, perhaps to a greater extent than we are aware of. I do not mean common selfishness with regard to our

own things, but selfishness in regard to the Lord's things; we are much hindered in this way. We need to be delivered from this kind of selfishness, so that apart from every thought of ourselves we might be able to look at things in the light of the Lord, in the light of the relationship of the assembly to the Lord and what is really involved in that relationship.

In the first place I want to bring before you the point of departure. I am not speaking of that which is merely individual. I am speaking concerning Christ and the assembly. Our attention has been called of late to the distinction between the primary thoughts of God, and those thoughts of God which have been brought before us consequent upon the entrance of sin—the presence of sin in the world, and I would like to say that the relationship of the assembly to Christ belongs to the primary thoughts of God. In the very beginning of the Bible, in the account of things here prior to the entrance of sin, when there was nothing of the kind to affect man, nor to call out the blessed activities of God in grace, I need not recount to you the story of creation as we have it by the Holy Ghost in the opening of Genesis. I refer to the six days of creation, and how at last man was brought upon the scene, everything ordered and arranged by God with reference to man. Then the man was brought

upon the scene. The whole scene of creation was open under the eye of God; there was nothing evil in it; God was able to say as He surveyed it that it was "very good." It pleased Him to look upon it, and it was at that time that you get that wonderful statement, "It is not good for man to dwell alone." You might think it primarily applied to Adam, but no! it primarily applied to Christ.

We are told in Romans v. that Adam was the figure of Him that is to come, and we must take account of things as under the eye of God. God's mind, God's interest, was primarily in Christ. When He said concerning the man down here, "It is not good that man should be alone," we then get for the first time in scripture after the creation of man the expression of divine sovereignty. God says, "I will." What did He "will"? What was His purpose—His counsel? What was in the mind and heart of God? It was this, "I will provide an helpmeet for him." There we get in type Christ and the church! Sin is not in question, sin is not there. I have no doubt that in the light of the first Epistle of John that sin existed at that time, but it did not exist in connection with man nor in relation to the creation brought before us in the opening of Genesis and which God pronounced to be "very good." Sin existed already in relation to Satan;

he was the original sinner—he "sinneth from the beginning" or "outset," but there was a created scene down here without sin. So that we are not going beyond scripture in saying that the truth of Christ and the assembly belongs to the primary thoughts of God.

I do not wish to traverse all the distance between the opening and the end of the Bible, but I just want to call your attention to the end. When the end is brought before us, God does not say much about the eternal state, though He speaks plainly, and no doubt tells us all that we need to know about it at the present time; and when the new heavens and new earth come into view in Revelation xxi. what do we see? We see the bride of Christ. We see her in all her undimmed loveliness and freshness. One thousand years at least had rolled by; the world to come, the whole millennial age had passed by, and are there no signs of fading, no signs of age in her? No, she is still "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." I only refer to this, I am not dwelling upon it now, but I wish to point out that if in the opening of Genesis before the existence of sin took place so far as this world is concerned we see foreshadowed God's primary thought, so in Revelation xxi. when sin is "no more"—gone—when what John Baptist declared of the Lord Jesus Christ on

the banks of Jordan when he sees Jesus coming to him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" when that has taken place, He has borne it away and not a trace of sin or of anything to remind you that sin ever existed remains in that bright scene—that blessed moment, then we find God free to return to His primary thoughts. There is Christ and there is His assembly; He is not as Mediator, there is no need of mediation then, but there, beloved, in that scene is His assembly adorned for Him; there she is in all the glory and brightness and freshness that God has purposed to adorn her with, "As a bride adorned for her husband," she has a place in that scene.

Now I would like to speak simply about this message to the Angel of the assembly in Ephesus. I leave the Old Testament for the present; the church is not there, as we know, except in type; the first actual mention of the truth of the church is in Matthew xvi. There Christ says, "On this rock I will build my assembly." The moment has come; there has been the revelation by the Father of the blessed Person of Christ to Peter, who says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And the Lord says, "On this rock"—Himself, the Father's revelation of Himself—"I will build my assembly."

Now I pass on. We come to the Acts of the Apostles—to the day of Pentecost; the Lord had died; He had been raised from among the dead and had ascended, and taken His place up there in glory, and from that scene of heavenly glory the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost. The result is that the church is here; she is here as an actual fact; the presence of the Holy Ghost from the risen, ascended and glorified Christ—the Son of God, has brought into existence the assembly.

But I am not going to speak now about the assembly as the "one body," nor as the house of God, the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, nor as seen for a brief season as the assembly at Jerusalem; but what I am going to speak about is local assemblies—assemblies here and there. There were many local assemblies, but I want now to call your attention to the one particular assembly at Ephesus.

I think the scriptures fully entitle us to consider the assembly at Ephesus as rising, in apprehension of privilege unfolded to them, above and beyond every other assembly at that time. From a very small beginning (see Acts xix.) the assembly at Ephesus had grown numerically and spiritually. Afterwards we find the apostle paying them a long visit; you remember when on his way to Jerusalem he

sent from Miletus and called the elders of the Ephesian assembly to him, and he rehearsed to them his ministry. He said that he had not "shrunk from announcing to them all the counsel of God." In that assembly he had unfolded all the wonderful range of things that lies within that expression—"the counsel of God." Later on he writes to them a marvellous letter. We have often been told that there is a certain connection between each epistle and the state of the saints composing the particular assembly to which it was written; you cannot fail to see this connection in the first epistle to Corinth, and in the epistle to the assemblies in Galatia, and that to the saints at Colosse, and we see this connection in a marked way in the Epistle to the Ephesians. What a marvellous unfolding of the counsels of God is there! One never tires reading the opening of the epistle to the Ephesian assembly. It begins at the very top: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." You cannot find anything above that, it is the peak that towers up above every other peak; and the Ephesian saints were there, and as there, in Christ, they were spoken to as having been blessed with every spiritual blessing. Then further on you get in chapter iii. that wonderful prayer. Do you know the climax of

that prayer? He says, "And that ye may know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God."

I believe that prayer was answered in the assembly in Ephesus. I do not believe that the apostle bowed his knees for naught. He says: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father . . . of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." I believe that prayer found its answer. What light, what marvellous privilege, what a state there must have been in those saints! That prayer has in view what is subjective in the saints: "To be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man." It is *inward* and spiritual; it was to be effected in them, and that "being rooted and founded in love" they might be able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, length, depth and height, and that they might "know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge," that they might be "filled to all the fulness of God." That was not simply what was unfolded in ministry to them, but there had been wrought in them by the Spirit an answer to it; these saints at Ephesus had reached the top. You say, How do you know? I know it from Revelation ii. The Lord says there: "But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." If first love has never been reached you cannot

be charged with having *left* it. It was reached at Ephesus; in that assembly; by the Spirit, there had been wrought such a response—a full response to the love of Christ for the assembly, and *that is first love.* It is not the first love of a new convert (we use the expressions of scripture very loosely). It is the assembly down here with the light of the range of the counsels of God; it is the assembly down here in the knowledge of the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and as answering to that love.

And that is where declension began. I do not mean geographically, I mean where it began spiritually. It began at the highest point that can be reached down here (I say it reverently, recognising all Christ's interests in the assembly, and recognising the ministry of the Holy Ghost with us in the assembly), the highest point that can be reached by the assembly down here—the only thing I know beyond it is not beyond it even in character, it is only the difference between spiritual reality now and eternal actuality by and bye. Well, that is where it began. But the wonderful thing is this—in connection with this particular message, and indeed with all these messages—one gets to know, if I might say it reverently, the feelings of the heart of Christ in relation to His assembly here. Oh, how He must have felt that leaving of first love! Really outwardly

the assembly at Ephesus was still in a wonderful state; there were no signs or symptoms of outward decay; there was wonderful activity, wonderful energy of a spiritual sort, there was no thought at Ephesus of putting up with anything evil, they had tried those who took high ground, who said they were apostles and were not, and they had found them liars, and there was patience, and endurance, they had not fainted. But the eye of Christ discerns, and His lips pronounce the declension.

"I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." I would, beloved, that the impression—the divine conviction might come home to us of what really is proper to the assembly in relation to Christ; that is what the Lord looks for and prizes; it is not what people, and even God's people sometimes value and prize. A great deal is thought of outward order, and I am not saying a word against it, but if there is not the responsive affection to the love of Christ for the church it will not please Him, it will not suit Him. It was not simply that they had fallen, but the point of the statement is: "*Whence*" they had fallen. I would not make light of any kind of fall, but I would that we might feel the force of the Lord's words: "Remember therefore *whence* thou art fallen, and repent!" They had fallen from the greatest height, and the Lord calls

them to *repent*, and I would that *we* might understand it. We think we understand repentance on the part of the sinner, but have you ever thought of what repentance is on the part of the saint, and on the part of the assembly? The Lord says: "Repent and do the first works." You might say, What *are* first works? First works are the expression of first love. There is a great variety of works; there are works that are not thought much of down here, and which do not gain credit here, but I am sure of this, that "*first* works" will not fail to secure His approbation and the expression of His delight. The assembly at Ephesus had left first love, and with the decline of first love, first works were no more.

Let me say a word further with regard to the phases of the decline. In a certain sense the seven messages to the seven assemblies present a consecutive and a successive history, but (not to go into details) what is the final result of falling from first love? Spued out of Christ's mouth. There is quite a journey between, but this is where it leads to, that is the ultimate end of falling from the heavenly height of first love. So it is a very serious matter, and I would that we might think of it in a very serious way, and remember, beloved brethren, we are here where the decline has taken place, and we are here in the presence

of the consequences of the decline; we cannot ignore it, and it would be profitable for us to recognise it.

Now I turn for a moment to the message to Philadelphia. There we see the point of recovery. If you read these messages it will produce a sad impression upon your heart. First in Ephesus there is a fall from the height of first love, then you come down to Smyrna and Pergamos, and while there is in Smyrna much the Lord can and does approve of, and concerning which He encourages the saints to be faithful unto death and He will give them a crown of life, still on the other hand there are evidences of increasing declension. They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes at Ephesus, but they are tolerated further on, and their doctrine is tolerated too. You trace all these assemblies and you come to the last four, which are those which particularly concern *us*, because it is evident that these last four—Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea—continue to the end. So somewhere and somehow there must be that now that answers to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Laodicea. I cannot speak for the want of time so fully as I would like, but I may say this—you will find in Sardis the last appeal of Christ to the church here; there is no appeal after Sardis, there is no need of appeal in Philadelphia, and Laodicea is beyond

appeal. The Lord says, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." There may be individuals that He loves, but not the church at Laodicea. When you come to Philadelphia I do not know how it impresses you, but one feels at least relieved. There is Thyatira—that terrible state of things (there is I know a remnant described as "the rest," but I do not speak of that at this moment); there is Sardis, "a name to live"; and what good is a name to live when you are dead; it is a mockery; it is empty pretension, "works not found complete before God," and the terrible threat hanging over Sardis that the Lord would treat her like the world—would come upon her as a thief in the night. When you come to Laodicea, well, you have to turn away from it if you are at all spiritual, if you have any feeling for Christ you can only turn away from it with a pained heart at the utter indifference to Christ that is evinced; self-complacency, self-satisfaction, "I am rich and have need of nothing." What a terrible state, so obnoxious, so nauseating to Christ.

Now, when we come to Philadelphia, I think one might be justified in speaking of its surroundings, for it is preceded by Thyatira and Sardis and succeeded (I mean in the order of statement, I am not speaking of the order of

time) by Laodicea, and there stands Philadelphia. What do you find there? What is perfectly according to Christ. Perfectly suitable to Christ, and, beloved, the Lord Jesus has not one word of censure or blame to say. You cannot read the message to Philadelphia without feeling impressed with the encouragement, complete from the first word to the last. I would that I were able and had the time to speak fully of it, but what I want to say is that the point of recovery is in Philadelphia. We have dwelt a good deal upon the point of departure, because you must see the point of departure in order to apprehend the point of recovery; the point of recovery must be equal to the point of departure. Will Christ be satisfied with anything less? Will the Spirit of God work from any lower standard than what is perfectly suitable to Christ? I cannot believe such a thing. It is impossible. I want to say emphatically that whilst the word "love" on the part of Philadelphia (mark this!) is not mentioned in the message, *His* love is declared when He says, "And to know that I have *loved thee;*" but while the word *love* as marking Philadelphia is not mentioned there is the threefold unquestionable evidence that recovery to first love is reached in the answer to *His* love in the saints in Philadelphia.

I hope we shall be able to divest our minds, beloved, of all geographical or ecclesiastical ideas. I trust the Lord will give us ability to take in the spiritual application of the message to Philadelphia. Let me tell you one thing very plainly, there is no publicity in Philadelphia. Are you on the line of publicity? What is the idea of publicity? It is the eye of *man*—the approval, the endorsement of *man;* and what an unholy competition there is all around us to-day, each, as it were, bidding to outvie the other with regard to publicity. Let me tell you there is no publicity in Philadelphia; hence Philadelphia does not represent any public body. Philadelphia is not brethrenism. If you have ever taken that thought up, *drop it!* We all would seek to be Philadelphian as to our state, but Philadelphia is not brethrenism. How that beloved servant of the Lord, Mr. Raven, laboured in his soul, that the saints might be delivered from the idea of brethren*ism*! When you come to "isms," I would not give you much for the choice; I was once, and I am ashamed to say it, in Methodism, and I am sure the Lord never brought me out of Methodism to put me in another "ism." It is a matter of prayerful exercise, and has been with me for some years, that not one bit of "ism" might be found about us, and I would wish the Lord to utterly divest *me* of it. There is nothing for

the eye of man in Philadelphia, nothing for the praise of man; but everything for *His* eye and everything according to Himself.

Now for the threefold proof. Oh, how beautiful are the three "Mys" of this message! Are you acquainted with them? Christ is speaking. He says, "*my* word," "*my* name," and the "word of *my* patience." Now, when you find these things, you may know that the Spirit of God has effected recovery. First love is there, and first love asserts itself. "My word," "my name," "word of my patience." The Lord says, "Thou hast a little power." What it must be to Christ to be able to recognise the presence and proof of the power of the Holy Ghost, for any real power in Christianity is that of the Holy Ghost. "Thou hast a little power, and hast kept my 'word,'" not "words." "If a man love me he *will* keep my word"—not *ought* to. His word is kept and cherished. He is not here. What *is* here? What represents Him? In one sense the Holy Ghost represents Him, but in another sense He is represented by His word, and His name, and the word of His patience. I do not want to strain this passage, or to give any extraordinary meaning to it; there is no need of that; it is unmistakable: "Thou hast kept my word," and "hast not denied my name." *There is recovery!* The love of the Christ has its place

in the hearts of those who morally and spiritually stand for Philadelphia, and there is response to that love. Then there is another expression. Philadelphia has a crown. "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." What is the crown? First love is the crown. Christ has got His crown. There is that which is His distinguishing glory, and there is that which is the distinguishing glory of the assembly here, the crown seen in Philadelphia. Do not let any one take it from you. Be careful about your crown!

There is one thing more I should like to say before I close and that is—do not take Philadelphia as representing anything outward, anything material—what some speak of as assembly order or anything of that sort. Let me remind you, there was much in Ephesus that the Lord Himself commended; there was nothing outward or external lacking there; all was as it should be, but we find this in the history of things, that where first love is lacking, sooner or later, even the outward thing will go. It *has* gone. I would ask you, can you find anything that answers even to that which the Lord commends in Ephesus at the present time? It has gone. Oh, beloved, do not get the idea of anything outward, even that of meetings or fellowship, however blessed that may be and *is;* what the Lord is seeking now

and the Spirit too (and no wonder, for He is coming, He says: "I come quickly,") is to effect in us, to produce and maintain in us, an answer to the love of Christ to His assembly, and that is recovery. It is a state produced by the Spirit.

I am sorry to have to speak so briefly, but I trust the Lord will help us. I feel it is a great thing for the saints of God to get help inwardly. The Lord is coming. I would like to allude to one more scripture. There is a certain connection between Philadelphia and Revelation xxii., nearly at the close, where the Lord presents Himself; He says: "I Jesus . . . I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Listen to the response! "And the Spirit and the bride say, *Come.*"

May this blessed effect be really produced in us to His praise and glory!

THE REVELATION OF GOD.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth." (John i. 14.)

LAST week we endeavoured, from the three scriptures we read, to bring before you the wonderful fact—the wonderful truth that the Lord is a divine Person—a divine Person and God. In John i. 1 we are told: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now, it is this same Person of whom we wish to speak to you to-night; but we shall speak of Him as *incarnate*. That is why I have read this verse. It is the one verse in the Bible that declares the truth of incarnation—"*And the Word became flesh*"—that is the truth of incarnation, and we would remind you again of that term "flesh." It is a term of *condition*, and further, it stands in the Bible not for angelic condition, but for human condition, and we want to speak of the blessed Lord to-night as incarnate, as having become Man. "The Word became flesh."

I am conscious of the greatness of what we are attempting—conscious, too, of my own

inability, but I count on the Lord to help me by His Spirit. I have found out this—that if the Lord, in the truth of His Person, is our theme—the subject of our hearts, we may count upon the help of His Spirit. You know what the Lord said later on in this gospel. "He shall glorify me: for he shall . . . take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." One might be so bold as to express it thus, with infinite freedom and delight—the Spirit of God *glorifies Him*.

Now, beloved, that our thoughts may be in some measure in order, I should like to speak of the Lord as having become flesh, and I should like to speak of Him in relation to man, and in relation to God. There are expressions—names—divinely given titles, applied to Him in scripture, that present Him in special relation to man. Perhaps the first distinctive title given to Him in scripture is "the seed of the woman." He is the seed of the woman, and the Holy Spirit in the progress of scripture never forgets it. If He is the seed of the woman in the very first statement from God about Him (and it is God's statement, it is God's testimony about Him), we find, beloved, as I have said, the Spirit of God maintains it. You find it in Isaiah. He is the virgin's Son—a virgin shall conceive, a virgin shall bear a Son.

So when you come to the New Testament: take that lovely account (for exquisitely lovely it is) in the opening of Luke. Take the interview of Gabriel with the Virgin Mary and his language in connection with it. How perfectly beautiful it is! He first tells her that she was to have a child, and further, when she in holy grace (for there was no spirit of demurring, or any expression of unbelief) says, "How shall this be?" the angel says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

There is another beautiful and very distinct expression in this connection about the Lord in Galatians iv. "When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son"—mark—"*made of a woman.*" I do not know whether the beauty of it has struck you, and whether the wonderful wisdom of God in connection with it has impressed you. We know the weak point in the creature of sin—the *woman;* the devil did not begin by attacking Adam, by gaining a point of vantage over Adam, he began with the woman, and scripture notes it. Look at 1 Timothy ii. 14 in the New Testament. Has the Holy Ghost forgotten it? Never. He speaks unmistakably about the woman. She was the first in the transgression,

she was the one deceived, and so on. Now, beloved, there is something very beautiful in this. If Satan had apparently obtained a victory and gained a point of vantage in connection with the woman, what does Jehovah say? He says, as it were, "I will meet you, I will more than match you. Have you deceived the woman? Have you gained an apparent triumph through the woman? *The woman's seed shall bruise your head.*"

What a beautiful thought that is! Let me emphasise this point a moment in this way—that in speaking of the Lord as the woman's seed—the virgin's Son—that holy thing, as the Angel Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary, that shall be born of thee—made of a woman—God's Son made of a woman—made under the law. What is the point? Special *connection with man as such.* And the more you ponder the wonderful fact of the incarnation, and all the details given us in Luke in respect of it, the more it will impress you, because if there was to be established a link between God and man, it must be in connection with the woman. That is the point. I venture to enlarge a little on this point. I do not know how far we have studied it. What I mean by studying it is looking at it in the light of scripture; not imagining anything, not thinking out of our own minds, but how far have we turned it over

in the light of scripture, because (to go back a moment) we know man was created in the likeness and image of God and there was the whole order of creation, and it involved not simply responsibility on the part of man, but it involved claim and right on the part of God. Man's responsibility and God's rights are inseparable. In the very nature of things they are inseparable, because man is God's creature, and if he is a moral, intelligent, responsible creature, God has constituted him such. There was all the question of the glory of God, the rights of God, the claims of God, involved with the responsibility of man as created by God and placed here in the likeness and image of God—placed here responsible to represent God in all His creation; and accordingly what do you find? You find very early in the Old Testament God begins to assert His claim to the earth, and when God speaks of Himself as the God of all the earth, you do not imagine, do you, that it is a depopulated earth?

There is nothing material about God. God is a Spirit, He is ever and always a Spirit, and He has His claim and He begins early to assert His claim. The further you read in Genesis the more the assertion of claim on the part of God stands out. You must be satisfied with my just touching this point, but look at Israel after God took them up in a distinct way

Take the point of their crossing the Jordan with the Ark. The Ark was everything for them in crossing the Jordan. When they got there it was the time of barley-harvest, and it was full; and there could not have been any passage of the Jordan but for the Ark. How is that Ark spoken of? It is the Ark of the *God of all the earth.* I am bold to say when God took that people into that land, that in putting that people into possession of that land God was giving expression to His right and title to all the earth. Let me give you one more very striking scripture. I am tempted to read it to you. It is at the end of Revelation iv.: "Saying, Thou art worthy, O our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created ALL things, and for thy will"—mark that: what does that mean? It means for God's purpose—for God's satisfaction, and for God's delight—"and *for thy will* they were and they have been created." Now, beloved, I speak simply; we are familiar at least with the statements as to the consequences of sin on the part of man—how it dragged the whole system of creation here into ruin. Romans viii. expresses it, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Even the creation as such is represented in a state of bondage—bondage to corruption. Now we

know that we are a heavenly people. I wish we knew it better! I am sure it would be a wonderful thing for us if we did know it better! Our calling is not to the land of Canaan, our calling is on high—not here. We are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." In 1 Corinthians xv. we find—"the first man is of the earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. As is the one made of dust, such are those made of dust; as is the heavenly one, such are also the heavenly ones." That is blessedly true. But there is another side, and I sometimes think that even in the little measure in which we may have apprehended the heavenly side of things in Christianity, we have perhaps been disposed to lose sight of the other side, and I just now want to recall you to it, and to speak a little of incarnation. "*The Word became flesh.*" A divine Person enters into human condition and is found here as a Man. How marvellous! He is the "seed of the woman," the virgin's Son, the root and offspring of David, "that holy thing that shall be born of thee," God's Son, made of a woman—and as the seed of the woman He has taken up everything connected with the responsibility of man; He has taken up everything connected with the rights and claims and glory of God. If you read merely the account in Genesis, it would seem as if the enemy just had what we

call a "walk over." He seemed to triumph so easily. He did not seem to encounter any difficulty whatever; it looks as if man the moment he was tested fell, and we know what has come in. As the result of that, even in Genesis, what results do you find? Well, you find at least three things—toil, sorrow, death, and that before Cain comes forward. Then when Cain comes in you have another element—hatred, murder. Now look at Genesis vi. The Lord looks down and takes account of things. There comes a distinct moment when the Lord takes a definite account of man down here. What does God see? The whole scene is filled with corruption and violence. And what about God? It grieves His heart. Think of that! Scripture says that God is grieved in His heart, and it goes so far as to say He repented He had made man upon the earth. Then follows the flood. Oh, beloved, it would seem for the moment like a complete triumph of the enemy. Not a live man is to be seen. Noah is alive, but he is not seen, he is hidden in the ark, and the rest—but outside the ark it is just one unbroken scene of death. But *has* the enemy scored a triumph? Not he. He will never triumph when it comes to God's will. It is a foregone conclusion that the victory is with God. What about the woman's seed? God had not overlooked that when He sent

the flood. Oh no! You may go through all the dark, sorrowful, painful history that went on for four thousand years. But oh, beloved, *Christ comes in!* Christ comes to take things up in connection with the earth and in connection with the responsibility of man and of all the rights and claims of God. He takes it all up. Time would not admit going into detail, but let me ask, have we *thought* of, have we *pondered* how Christ came in to take up every question for God? You first get Adam in innocency but in responsibility. Then you get man sinful, but still in responsibility. Then God takes up Abraham, takes up the children of Israel, takes up the Jews—still in responsibility. It is breakdown with Adam, breakdown all through—nothing but breakdown and failure. Then, thank God, *Christ comes!* "The Word became flesh." He—that blessed One, came here, the seed of the woman, and He began at the very beginning. What a wonderful life was the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as Man down here! I see Him taking up every broken thread in all the history of man in responsibility. Adam and Noah, and Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob and the children of Israel—the whole thing—I see every thread taken up and every thread maintained. You and I may fail and be very seriously defective in our appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I

can tell you of One who does not fail to appreciate Him—the One who opened the heavens above Him and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I find all my delight." The heart of God was filled with divine delight and joy. "Ye shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." What a sight for God! What a sight for heaven! The heart of God (may I say) cannot contain itself; it bursts out through the angelic heavenly host, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men." "For thy glory they were and have been created." We might go into details but we have not time to-night, but oh, beloved, just think how God has been (I was going to say) at such infinite *pains* to write it all, not only from Genesis to Malachi, but from Matthew to Revelation. He has spread it thickly, brightly, gloriously upon the pages of scripture. Look at the Lord's statement to the Jews: "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." There they are—Genesis to Malachi, God's testimony of that blessed One. *They testify of Me.* We seem to think it wonderful when some one maybe gets up and begins to unfold a little of Christ from the Old Testament. I tell you what *I* think is wonderful and that is, that our eyes and hearts are not full of Christ as He is seen from

Genesis to Malachi! That *is* wonderful! But such is our feebleness.

Well, beloved, in the life of Christ God is glorified. Look at the record in the gospels of Satan's temptation—how the Lord was subject to the direct effort and attacks of the enemy, but, oh, how beautiful it is to read it! Then afterwards there were Satanic agencies and instruments — Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, Herodians — religious men and politicians, and they all had a try, but He more than answered every one of them. He had the last word with every one. In Matthew xxii. we are told that after that no one durst ask Him a question. Every mouth was stopped, the mouth of Satan and his agents were closed. He did it. Ah, beloved, have you *considered* Him as a Man down here? We are apt to put responsibility on the Lord as if it were only on the cross, but He took up the responsibility in His life. There was the question of what sin had brought man into—death and judgment—the judgment of God. He took that up on the cross, but He took the question of responsibility up in His life also. Go to the mount of transfiguration. There see a Man who has a perfect title *to live*, and not only to live *here*. There is a Man who could have gone up from the top of the holy mount right straight into heaven. There

He is—look at Him. Did He go up then? No. He came down from that mount of glory to *die!* By the grace of God He tasted death for everything. Had death any claim on Him? Oh, no; it had a claim on Adam and made its claim good. But here is a Man, beloved, on whom death has no claim, who knew no sin. "That holy thing"—*holy*, not innocent—One who had a perfect right to live upon God's earth, for death had no claim on Him. Oh, how wonderful it is, beloved! There He is, I want to call your attention to Him. Just rapturously gaze upon, by the Spirit, that blessed, peerless Man. What does the Holy Ghost say of His life as a Man here?—"that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Look at what He was here! And then He died, that others might enjoy it with Him. He died, and established a title for others, that others beside Himself might have a title, and more than a title to live! And He died, beloved, that we might get the Spirit, and have the *real, real* might and enjoyment of it *now*. What do you think of that?

But let me speak a little more of Him as Man in relation to God. We have spoken of Him in relation to man. Now look at Him as a Man in relation to God, for there is a distinction there. There was a Man here, beloved—that blessed One, and that Man is

great enough to reveal God. I delight in John i. 18, "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Who has He declared? God. The Word as become flesh, He has declared God. Mark! it is the same divine Person that we have been looking at, but we are now looking at that divine Person in incarnation, as having become Man, and it is as having become Man that He declares God. It is as having become Man that He is the image of the invisible God. There could not be any image of the invisible God in a man until that blessed One, the Word—became flesh. The moment He became flesh, there is the image. He is the brightness, the effulgence, the outshining of God's glory. Think of it! Oh, beloved, have you thus looked at Him? One would speak soberly, but if in any measure you have by faith seen His face, you need not fear to look at the face of an angel. Have you thus seen Him? He is the brightness of God's glory, the exact expression of divine substance, and hence, beloved, He has declared God. In that blessed One as having become flesh God has been perfectly revealed. I am not forgetting that His death is the point where it all culminates. If you want the climax of the revelation of God in a Man, it is in that Man who hung upon the cross—that is the Man in whom God was revealed.

Have you thought of that? Oh, think of Him as Man! And then there is another point—think of a Man who fully answered to the God He revealed! There was a perfect answer in Him to God. That is why the Lord says what He does in John xvii. 3: "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God." If you ever know Him as the only true God, you will have to learn Him in that One—nowhere else. Are you what they call a student of nature? If you are, I am sorry for you, for you have no *true* knowledge of God. You may know something of the divinity and power of God in the visible things of creation, but God remains, unrevealed, unknown and unknowable, *outside the Lord Jesus Christ.* I do not wonder that men turn their backs on Christ and on the blessed revelation of God in Him, when with learned, educated eyes they begin to peer into creation. They tell you, "We have looked everywhere, and we do not know God, we cannot find Him." No, of course they cannot. But oh, how wonderful it is to look at a Man who answered to God! What it must have been to God! What a wonderful thing that God had One here in whom He could reveal Himself—One in whom He could come out to man in all that He is as God, and yet, at the same time, One who as Man down here perfectly responded to the

revelation of God. Does it tire you, beloved, to hear of Him? Some could sit for hours and hear about their blessings. They say, "How sweet it is to hear how wonderful our blessings are." True! but have you got no further? Even Charles Wesley, who was a Methodist, got on to this—

> "Give me *Thyself*, from every boast,
> From every wish set free;
> Let all I am in Thee be lost,
> But give Thyself to me."
>
> "Thy gifts, my God, cannot suffice,
> Unless Thyself be given,
> Thy presence makes my paradise
> And where Thou art is heaven."

Are you sure that you would feel at home if you went to heaven to-night? It is all *Himself* there. All are absorbed with Him there. Oh, beloved, we shall at last, thank God, if not before, get to the end of ourselves. We shall at last find ourselves in holy, heavenly liberty to be absorbed and occupied and taken up with Himself. I desire to speak soberly. I just begin to understand what Paul said, "Having a desire to depart and to be"—what? to be very happy up there with all the saints? No, "to be WITH CHRIST, which is far better." Oh, beloved, think of One great enough to be the revelation of God and great enough to respond

to that revelation, and in response to fill the heart of the infinite and eternal God with delight. May the Spirit of God bring Him in all His glory and in all His beauty and in all His perfection as a Man before our hearts. May He *really* do it! I have only just touched this subject. I have only touched the fringe of it. But *think* of who He is and what He is! He is great enough for earth and He is great enough for heaven, and the time is coming when He will flood the universe of God with love, and light, and glory. He *will*. He *will*, and oh, beloved, what a marvellous thing it will be! and how wonderful to be taken up by Him, and to be in any way contributory to His glory. It is indeed marvellous!

THE LOVE OF GOD AND RESPONSE TO IT.

(Luke xv.)

I do not want to give an address this afternoon but just to talk to you quite informally about the love of God.

In the beginning of Luke's gospel we learn who the Lord Jesus Christ was as *Man*. He was the Son of God. If you want to learn who He is as a divine Person you must go to John's gospel; John i. 18 brings out that truth. But in Luke we learn who He is as Man. The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." So when He was born God immediately owns Him in this peculiar way—"Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." (Heb. i. 5.) Now what marked Him as Man was this—He was the Son of God. When He was baptized God opened the heavens and said, "This is my beloved Son," shewing that the Lord Jesus Christ was the peculiar object of the love of God, and He adds—"In thee I have found my delight," shewing that there is in Him as Man a perfect answer to God's love.

How these two things mark Him! If you give your heart to any one, nothing would satisfy you but that they should answer to that love. What I want to bring before you is the Lord Jesus Christ as Man. Nothing was lacking in God's delight in Him; all His affection was concentrated on that Man, to whom He says: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." But more than that, God found in that Man a perfect response to His love. I wish I could express what that must have been to God. He created man in perfect innocence; man was an innocent creature and there was a delightful intercourse between God and Adam. God walked in the garden, but then sin came in, and God lost all pleasure in that man and had to drive him out of the garden, and put a flaming sword at the gate of Paradise. About one thousand six hundred years ran on until you come to Genesis vi., and God looked down and we are told that "it grieved him in his heart."

Then later we get the children of Israel, God separated them for Himself, and gave them the law and said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Was there any response in man? Before Moses came down from the mount man had set up an idol. Man has never responded to God, he was only a disappointment to Him. God had set His heart

on man but He got no response from him. But the Son of God came here into Manhood and God can look down on *Him* and say—*There* is not only a Man on whom I can concentrate all My love, but there is One who answers perfectly to My love.

Now what is the point of Christianity? Why, to make you and me like that Man—like the Son of God. In Romans viii. 29 we are told that we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." God has got that before Him; that is what Christianity means, and what the gospel means — that you and I should be like the Son of God, so that we might know and enjoy all God's love and answer to it. The great point of Luke xv. is that the Lord Jesus, who was the peculiar object of the heart of God—the One who knew that love and was answering to it as no one else could—that *He tells out* the heart of God. There is only one thing worth your while, or worth mine, only one thing worth knowing, and that is the *heart* of God—to know God's love, and that He can fill your heart and mine. We like the sunshine and rejoice in it, but, beloved, what is it to have your heart lit up with the eternal sunshine of the love of God, and to have your heart responsive to that love. Issues are being raised now as to what we believe doctrinally; these questions are but

as dust, the great thing is—do you by the Spirit *know* that God is love? Has the sunshine of that love entered your heart? John, in his first epistle, says, "We have known and believed the love of God"; that is the point, for as you know it and believe it, your heart answers to it, and we love Him because He first loved us. Could anything be more simple? We all know how everything changes here, how disappointments and sorrows come in, but at all times there is the love of God, and that love is brighter than the sun. The sun will set to-night, but God's love has no sunset, no clouds or interruptions; there it is like eternal sunshine, it shines and shines on for ever.

In Luke xv. we get really one parable in three parts, but all three are distinct; the shepherd is distinct from the father, but the shepherd is God the Son, the woman is God the Spirit, the father is God the Father—there is distinction on the one hand but marvellous blending on the other.

And all is to bring out the heart of God! The Son of God came down here to express before man all that was in the heart of God; now He has died, has been raised from the dead, exalted and glorified. All the light of that love, and response to that love, has been left in this world, and now from Christ exalted the Spirit has come down and the love of God is

shed abroad in hearts by the Holy Ghost That is to say, the Spirit has come to make good in your heart and in mine the very love that rested on Him as Son of God and to which He perfectly responded; the Holy Ghost has come to shed abroad that very love so that the eternal sunshine of it should light up our hearts to produce the same kind of response to it that there was in His heart.

What was the response? Look at Him in that dark moment in Gethsemane; the agony of His soul was so great that the sweat was as drops of blood. What did He say? "*Abba, Father.*" In the heart of that blessed Man in that dark moment there was perfect response to the love of God. God takes us up and makes us sons. He has "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father," that is, producing in our hearts the same response to Himself that was in the heart of Jesus, the Son of God. That is Christianity; and I assure you that nothing is worth your thought or mine but that your heart and mine should know the same love that He knew as Man here—that that same love should fill your heart and mine with eternal sunshine and that there should be produced in your heart the same response as there was from His—that "Abba, Father," the utterance of responsive affection should be begotten in your heart by faith and

in the *knowledge* of the love of God. It does not mean that you will not have trials and sorrows here. If it is a question of trials He is the pattern Man. Do not imagine that you will not have trials; it is guaranteed to us by the Lord, for He says: "In the world ye shall have tribulations," and strangely enough tribulation is what we are so afraid of.

But what does scripture say? "We also boast in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience." (Rom. v. 3.) Do you not want experience? Do you know what is the matter with people when they go about with sad faces and are full of complaints? They do not know the love of God; the divine remedy for sorrow is knowing the love of God, bowing to the will of the One who so loves me. If you knew His love you would be like one who in a dark, damp cell in prison wrote—

> "Upon Thy will I lay me down
> As child upon its mother's breast;
> No silken couch or bed of down
> Could ever give me such sweet rest."

Now I am longing to tell you what the love of God means; it means all that is *good*, it means peace—peace from the moment you wake to the moment you sleep—it means joy, it means everything that can be put into the

word *blessedness*. I wish I could tell you how to know that love and to have your heart answering to it. I once went to California, and a brother said to me, "Just think, we have three hundred and twenty cloudless days here every year." I replied, "I can beat *that* by forty-five, I have three hundred and sixty-five cloudless days." Is that in my circumstances—in my responsible life? Oh, no; but in my spiritual relation to God there is not a single cloud. "We have known and believed the love of God." The Spirit has shed abroad His love in my heart, and has produced an answer to it. *That* is sunshine, peace and rest. The love of God will take away all the worry, and fret, and every evil desire from your heart; it will just clear it out, such things cannot stand in the sunshine of God's love. Why do people worry and fret about their circumstances? If you had asked Madame Guyon if she wanted to get out of prison, she would answer—

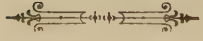
> "While place we seek and place we shun,
> The soul finds happiness in none."

Now I want you to look at Luke xv. and ponder the occasion. Often when you see golden sunshine the darkness of surrounding clouds make it seem brighter. In this blessed chapter we find the Lord down here, telling

out the love of God's heart, to whom? To "publicans and sinners." Those are the kind of people that suited Him, and He them, but the Pharisees murmured and said, "This man receiveth sinners." The Lord says, as it were, "I would like to tell you something about God." And then out comes the full disclosure of the heart of God—how God's love is set on men, and how God's heart delights when man turns to Him and repents; man is brought to know the love of God, and there is joy in the presence of angels.

I have come here to-day with a longing heart. I long for every person in this room, that their hearts might be filled and flooded with the eternal sunshine of God's love, and that their hearts should learn to respond to that love. Shew me a person *not* responsive to that love, and I know they do not *know* it. When you can say, "We have known and believed the love of God," then it is all settled; if I knew that you had all the sunshine of God's love flooding your heart, and if I heard that any trial had happened to you, I should sympathise with you, but still I would say, "It is all right." Why? Because "*all* things" work together for good—illness, poverty, sorrow. If you know that a thing is working for good, I could not tell you how quiet it makes you feel.

All God's love has come out in Jesus—the Son of God. I see two things—I see the love of God resting on Him, He has brought it to light in His Person, and I see in Him, as Man, a perfect answer to that love, and that is what God is seeking to effect with every one of us, to make us like that Man—as we have borne the image of the earthy we *shall* bear the image of His Son. Cheer up, you are in good hands; God has got you in His hands, and He is working to one end, and that end is to make you like His Son, so that all the eternal sunshine of His love should shine into your heart, and that you might respond to it fully.



NEW COVENANT MINISTRY.

(2 Cor. iii.)

My desire, beloved friends, in connection with the scripture we have just read is to bring before you a few thoughts in connection with the new covenant ministry.

I have often thought what a great joy it must have been to the apostle to write this second letter to the Corinthian saints. We are not left to our imagination as to this, because the apostle states in this second epistle that he had written the first epistle to them in grief and anguish of spirit, and with many tears; but that epistle had not only reached them, but it had pleased the Lord to use it, so that they had taken a very sober account of themselves before the Lord; indeed, there had been wrought in those beloved saints at Corinth real repentance, so that with respect to all that concerning which the apostle had to write them in his first letter, and really to reprove and correct them, they had now thoroughly cleared themselves. I am sure one cannot read the two letters without perceiving the marked difference; the apostle is able. not

merely to unfold his own heart and affection for them in this second letter, as he was not able to in his first letter, but what is of greater importance than this, he is really free, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, and under the control and direction of the Lord, to set before them that which is (when we consider it spiritually), unmistakably in advance of what we find in the first letter, and in saying this there is not the least thought in one's mind of underrating the importance of what comes out in the first letter. So far as God's side of things is concerned (and there is God's side even in the first letter), there is no imperfection: the ministry which is found in the two epistles is absolutely perfect, and will ever abide in all its perfection.

To speak simply, you find in the two letters a threefold ministry. There is the ministry of the gospel in the first epistle; that is, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not dwell upon it, but one can scarcely pass it by without saying how wonderful is even the most elementary ministry of the gospel! How wonderfully is the truth of the death of Christ, with all that it means, brought out in the first epistle! It means, beloved, not simply as we are told in chapter xv., that Christ died for our sins—it not only means an eternal ending of all our *sins*

in the death of Christ, but it means as we are told in the early chapters of the epistle, that Christ has been crucified for us, and not only have our *sins* all gone in the death of the Lord Jesus, but we ourselves as men according to flesh are gone too, all passed away from under the eye of God in the judgment of God as expressed in the cross. And then the Spirit, too, stands connected with the gospel ministry, as making good in the souls of the believers the divinely-intended effect of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, though, so far as the resurrection side of the gospel is concerned, the first epistle puts our resurrection in *actuality*, and therefore in the future.

But I want to call your attention to the ministry of the new covenant, which is—I think one may say—in advance of the gospel ministry, especially as it is unfolded in the closing part of the first epistle; and I think in this way the Spirit of God would intimate to us that these beloved Corinthians, having cleared themselves with regard to that which was connected with the flesh — with man according to the flesh, and hence, of course, with this world, are ready to be led on, and there is more than the *intimation* of this, there is the *recognition* of it, and that recognition takes shape in the ministry which the apostle

proceeds to unfold in his second epistle, in the portion of it that I have read.

I desire to speak simply; I am sure the more simply we can take account of the truth the more we shall be edified and helped by it. Theological terms operate like clouds to hide the clear, bright shining of the complete revelation of God in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The new covenant ministry, beloved friends, is a ministry of Christ; but it is not Christ dying for our sins, it is not exactly Christ crucified, as expressing the judgment of God upon man according to flesh, and of course the end of the world under the judgment of God; but it is Christ now as the expression of the heart of God, the love of God; that is what I understand by the new covenant ministry: it is the ministry of Christ as the One in whom there has come out a full disclosure of all that God is in His love toward us. But further—even that does not answer *fully* to the new covenant ministry; it is, objectively, the unclouded light of the disclosure—the revelation of God, the presentation to us of the heart of God, of all that God is in His love toward us. But the new covenant ministry is still more than that, because you cannot limit real ministry to that which is objective, to that which is on the part of God a matter of revelation, and which is consequently presented to us as *light*. Ministry has

also its subjective side, and whilst in a certain sense we may distinguish the two sides, I should seriously object to any separation of them: there is the ministry of that which we may speak of as objective—outside ourselves, but that same ministry is in the power of the Spirit of God; hence, it has its subjective effect. I know, speaking commonly, that there is largely the thought that public speaking, preaching, or whatever it may be, is ministry; but if we paid attention to this chapter, we should see that it speaks about the ministry of the Spirit *and of its subjective effect.*

I want to convey to you the *full* thought of the new convenant ministry. It comes as light from the revelation of God; there is that which is objective—God's love toward us—and I need not tell you God's love toward us does not in any wise depend upon what may be true *in us;* it is true *in itself,* and it finds its perfect expression in the Lord Jesus Christ; but, as I have said, there is the other side of it, there is the Spirit, and His divine operation in ministering that which is revealed; that which is presented objectively in the Lord Jesus Christ—the Spirit ministers to us, so that we may have the threefold effect of it.

The first effect of new covenant ministry is that you are quickened, you are made alive!

and we are made alive in our affections; to put it in the language of Romans v., "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which has been given to us." Now I may think of God's love in connection with Himself, as that which is really the expression of the heart of God toward us as His children, but in Romans v. it is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. That is new covenant ministry, and it is in this way that it operates to quicken us, to make us live; and it is a wonderful point, because it is life subjectively; and the effect is, there is response to the love of God; you love Him. It is a simple thing to state, but still it is worth stating: our attention has often been called to the fact that in Romans v. it is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, but chapter viii. is the answer to it—we love God; we do not read much about God's love to us in chapter viii., that is in chapter v., but what comes out in chapter viii. is that as the consequence of the Holy Ghost shedding abroad that love in our hearts there is a response to it; we love God. I know we speak of these things frequently, but, beloved brethren, who could overstate the importance of this? The fear is that we should come short in our hearts of answering to that wonderful love of God.

The apostle says He has made us new covenant ministers, not of *letter*—if you think of the new covenant in *letter* you are poorly off; of course we are not in a public way under the operation of the new covenant; the day is coming when God will make that new covenant with His earthly people here; and when He does it will be subjective in their case also, and it will have a marvellous effect upon them, there will be an answer in the hearts of Israel in a coming day to the love that is in the heart of God, they will love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength and understanding; but if we only think of the new covenant ministry in letter, the apostle says, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens." There is nobody so badly killed as the people who take up the mere language of these things and in a doctrinal or dogmatical way talk about them. The apostle says, "Who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens." Then follows the parenthesis, and when he takes up the thread again he says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit." That wonderful Person, that blessed Person—the Lord, He is the quickening, life-giving Spirit of the new covenant. Well, that is the first effect.

Then further down you get liberty, "But

where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There is not only life, but there is liberty. If I might attempt such an illustration, it is like Lazarus when he walked out of the grave, he had got life, but he had not liberty; the grave clothes had to be taken off so that this living man might enjoy in liberty the life he had received; so, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." It is not called the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of *God*, in this chapter, it is "the Spirit of *the Lord*."

Then there is a still more wonderful effect, and that is the transforming effect of the ministry of the new covenant. "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." How it stands out in blessed contrast to Moses! When Moses came down the second time the skin of his face shone with glory, and the children of Israel could not bear to look upon that glory-shining face, and so, when in the presence of the children of Israel, his face was veiled. But not so with the Lord Jesus, there is no veil on His face. Christ is the image of God, as we read in the next chapter, where, speaking about the glad tidings, the apostle says, "But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled *in* those that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the

thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them." He is the image of God, and looking on the Lord's glory with unveiled face we are changed into the same image, we become like Christ here, and that takes place *now*, because 2 Corinthians iii. is not dealing with the future, it is dealing with the saints in the present time, and it is unfolding in a wonderful way the effect of the new covenant ministry, the effect of the ministry of Christ as the One in whom all that God is in His love toward us has been perfectly expressed, and we are now the subjects of that ministry in the power of the Spirit—the Spirit of God. The apostle begins the chapter about the question of letters of commendation; he says, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or do we need, as some, commendatory letters to you, or from you? *Ye* are our letter." The saints were Paul's letter of commendation; and where was that letter written? In Paul's heart, "*Ye*" (and the "ye" is emphatic) "are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us." The saints were Christ's epistle. What a wonderful thought that is! I am not so much concerned about preaching as I am concerned before the Lord

that you and I should be in the good of these things in our souls by the power of God. "Ministered by us"—he has ministered—"written, not with ink"—it is not a question of an outside kind of mark, what might be legible in the eyes of man, but "the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables" (how hard were those stone tables!) "but on fleshy" (not fleshly) "tables of the heart." The writing on stone never effected anything; you know when Moses came down with those stone tables what a state of things there was at the foot of the mount amongst the very people to whom the stone tables were brought; those stone tables never produced one bit of response to God in their hearts.

"And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God: not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God; who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens." Now let me tarry a moment here again with regard to the ministry of the new covenant, which is Christ as the One in whom all that God is toward us has been expressed. It is to be deplored how largely Christianity so-called has become a matter of what is external—of what is outward; or if not altogether what is outward, it

has become a matter of mere doctrine. Let me say, the all-important thing is the effect *in the heart;* and so the ministry of the Christ, who is the expression of all that God is toward us, is taken up, and that love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and what is the effect of it? It quickens, it makes alive. We must not confuse things that differ. I do not wish to speak too critically, but the question of man's sins—of man's guilt, and the question of righteousness is one question; but, beloved friends, the question of life subjectively (not *objectively*, as is eternal life), but the question of life *subjectively*—spiritual life—that is, an answer in man's affections to the love of God, and to what there is in God's heart towards us—well, the importance of this could not be overstated. A great many difficulties are encountered by souls simply because they have never been under the power of the new covenant ministry, and that is why, oftentimes, things are taken up in the way in which they are, in a kind of outward, hard and fast, doctrinal sort of way; but we need to have our hearts brought under the power of the love of God, so that there should be an answer in your affections and in mine to what is in the heart of God and what has found its expression in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of us break bread and take the cup every first day of

the week, but I do not know whether we are impressed with what we ought to be spiritually familiar with—"This cup [the Lord's own language] is the new covenant in my blood." And what constitutes it the new covenant in His blood? Why, it is the expression of the death, the bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is not the expression of His death as accomplishing atonement; it is not the expression of His death in that character; it is the expression of His death as the full disclosure of the love that there is in the heart of God. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is the quickening power of the new covenant ministry, producing an answer to this love in your heart. If there is an answer to it in your heart or in mine, if we really love God, it is the result of the Holy Ghost having shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. What a wonderful thing it is when we enter upon life! I mean subjectively! I do not mean in the full sense of eternal life—that has its own sphere—but what a wonderful thing when we really begin to live! It has been said we begin to live as we begin to love, and we begin to love as the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. You might say that under the law God *commanded* love; He

claimed the affections of man's heart, but He never secured it under the law. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin [that was as a sacrifice for sin], has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law," &c. And what *is* the righteous requirement of the law? It could be summed up in one word—love—"that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled *in* us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit."

I would, beloved, that we were all clear about the new covenant ministry and the first effect of it, as really securing our affections for God. I could not express what the effect of it would be. How it would deliver many a believer from legality, to say nothing about doubts and fears and questionings—how all that would disperse from the soul! What a change it would make to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost and in that way to have an answer to His love in our affections. What wonderful things are predicated of love! Love delights in its object; it delights in the will of its object; it delights in the pleasure and glory of its object. How we should learn in our souls the contrast of what Peter spoke of, referring to the law, when he said that it

was a yoke that neither they nor their fathers could bear; we should learn in contrast to that that the yoke of Christ is easy, and His burden is light.

Now I would like to speak for a moment of the other two effects of the new covenant ministry. There is the second effect, and that is liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." I would like to be able to speak forcibly of the importance of spiritual liberty. How many believers are not free! Why? Because there is not in them the full effect of the new covenant ministry—the ministry of Christ as the One who not only gives full expression to that love, but who, as Man, is the perfect exponent of the liberty that belongs to that love. How freely He moved! What a perfect delight the will of God was to Him! I speak of Him as a Man down here. He could say: "I do always the things that are pleasing to him." He was Himself, on God's side, the expression of all that God is in His love towards us; but He was also the expression, as a Man, of the perfect answer to it. He was the exponent of that liberty that the apostle speaks of.

I would speak a little further as to the third effect, that is, the effect brought out in the end of this chapter. When the apostle resumes in verse 17, and says: "Now the Lord is the

Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,"—then he goes on: "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face," &c. In the next chapter we have the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ . . . there is quite a difference between the glory of the Lord and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The glory of the Lord is that which distinguishes Him; and He is looked at, not as down here in the days of His flesh, but as the risen, exalted, and glorified Man, and His glory is, that even as the exalted Man, the glorified Man, He is the perfect expression of all that God is in love toward us; and indeed it is very interesting and instructive to notice how in the New Testament the connection, the indissoluble connection, is maintained in the language of the Spirit of God between the love of God and the Lord Jesus Christ: "Nothing shall be able to separate us (we are told) from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And, looking on the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image. We become marked by that love of God; we become (I almost hesitate to say it) the exponents, in our measure, of that love of God. We are transformed according to the same image. It is the beginning now of that wonderful statement in connection with the purpose of God:

"whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." That wonderful work of transformation does not wait for the future, it begins now, it begins here: it is not, I need scarcely say, a question of the body now, the evidence abounds on every hand that our bodies are still mortal and very weak, but there is the inward effect of it, there is the inward transformation: we "are transformed according to the same image . . . even as by the Lord the Spirit." It is not exactly the Spirit of God, it is by the Lord, because it is the power, not, so to speak, of the transforming agent, it is the power of the transforming object, and we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, are transformed according to the same image. . . .

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." How profitable all our intercourse with one another would be if we were under this wonderful ministry of the new covenant.

I have spoken of it very feebly, but I have spoken of it with this encouragement, that the Lord might be pleased to encourage us with it, and to bring our hearts under it, and into all the blessed effect of the knowledge of Christ as the perfect expression of all that God is in His love toward us, and the subjective power of it, not knowing it simply as a *doctrine*, but

knowing it, beloved, as a *divine reality* in connection with the ministry of the Spirit of God in shedding that love abroad in our hearts, producing in our hearts, Godward and saintward, all the wonderful effects of this ministry.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

(2 Cor. v. 14 to end.)

Let me begin by saying verse 17 should read, "If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation."

On a previous occasion we attempted to present new covenant ministry from chapter iii. of this epistle: we would like now to say a few words about reconciliation.

The great point in new covenant ministry is, what God is towards us in His love, only as we remarked the thought in ministry is, not merely the setting forth of things, but that by which the things set forth are made good in our souls. Nothing could exceed the importance of new covenant ministry, because the great point is, it is on God's part. He is revealed in all His love toward us, and on our part we come to know Him as thus revealed. I would like to make that emphatic. It is a serious mistake to think that any other ministry could possibly exceed new covenant ministry. Indeed, but for new covenant ministry the ministry of reconciliation would not be possible, nor would there be any necessity for it. Yet the two are distinct, and I have no doubt of the divine

order in which it is given. You get in the end of the first Epistle to the Corinthians the ministry of the gospel, not merely what is set forth, but what is made effectual. You remember the opening of chapter xv., there is not only the setting forth of facts—"Christ died for our sins," &c., but there is the careful statement of the effect of the ministry. "By which also ye are saved." Then in 2 Corinthians iii. we have new covenant ministry, and here, chapter iv., the ministry of reconciliation. I repeat, I have no doubt that it is given in divine order. In the order of the work of God in our souls we begin with the gospel, we go on to the new covenant ministry and then to the ministry of reconciliation. There is one very encouraging fact (though we speak of it as threefold ministry, and we are free to do so, for scripture abundantly warrants our distinguishing the threefold ministry), it is all about *Christ*—it all has to do with God as revealed in Christ, so that there is nothing to perplex or to divert us, no multiplicity of objects; but still I would like to point out the distinctions.

In the ministry of the gospel as in that of the new covenant God comes out and approaches man in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is what God is in His grace and in His love toward us; but in the ministry of reconciliation it is what we are toward God.

We never learn truth by regarding ourselves. The whole truth of Christianity has been set forth perfectly in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man; we learn it in Him. We know the difficulty that is encountered by many souls in connection with the gospel; but it can invariably be traced to one simple fact, and that is, souls try to learn the truth of the gospel in connection with themselves: it can never be learned in that way, we must learn it in connection with Christ, it is set forth in Him. Romans v. is a striking illustration of what I say, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," but we do not learn the love of God by studying our hearts. Introspection in Christianity is a most pernicious thing. Having told us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts the Spirit of God turns our attention to the evidence of that love. It is outside ourselves, it is in the death of Christ that we learn everything in connection with Himself. It is so with the ministry of reconciliation.

Now let me name a point of importance (it is nothing new, you will find it plainly set forth in the writings of Mr. Wigram, Mr. Darby and Mr. Stoney, they put it in very clear form years ago), speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as a divine Person, scripture says of Him, "The Word became flesh." No human book ever put it like that; that is the divine

way—the perfect way. There is His place as Man in connection with the revelation of God: the setting forth of what God is in righteousness and grace. The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by and subsists through Jesus Christ, and in the new covenant you get the perfect setting forth of it in righteous power. Love is absolutely set forth in Him. It is wonderful to apprehend and appreciate what He is as Man and as Revealer of God. He perfectly sets forth what God is towards man.

Now the second point is not so readily apprehended: I refer to the place which the Lord Jesus has taken *as a Man Godward.* We see His place on God's side manward much more readily; saints are generally clear on that side, but what about His place on our side Godward? Now it is in this that we come to reconciliation and new creation. New covenant ministry involves the work of God in us, but nowhere are we told that it involves new creation. "If any one *be in Christ, there is* new creation." That is a momentous expression. *In Christ* you have new creation. The apostle here speaks of the *individual.* "If any *one,*" but he does not say that the person is new creation, he says of that person, "*there is* new creation." (New Trans.) "He is" is an incorrect and unfortunate addition to that scripture. The excellent translators of the

authorised version had no spiritual apprehension of new creation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" will not do. Reconciliation involves *being in Christ and new creation.*

Hence it involves the body of Christ. You do not get one body in new covenant ministry. In Romans xii. 5 (Romans is fundamental) you get "One body in Christ." In Ephesians ii. you get both Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God in one body; and then again there is something else connected with new creation, and that is the new man. You get it in both Ephesians and Colossians. Take Ephesians iv. 24, it is not an exhortation, it is not put in that way. We are not exhorted to put off the old man and to put on the new. The fact is stated that you *have* put off the old and put on the new. You get the same thing in Colossians iii. The point is the new Man. What about Him? "Which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness." In Colossians we get, "According to the image of him that has created him." It is a new Man, a new creation of God. In Ephesians it is not simply, as in Colossians, the thought of freshness and brightness, but it is that which never existed before—a new creation of God in truthful righteousness and holiness. I may put it in an awkward way, but I hope you will get hold of the thought of God in it.

Reconciliation is presented in Christ as Man on our side Godward. If you take the thought of His death there is no more simple statement of it than "He hath made him to be sin for us," but what a marvellous statement it is! It is carefully added, "who knew no sin." There are three statements made of the Lord in respect of sin, "He did no sin," "Who knew no sin," "In him is no sin." Of course we know that He never sinned, but there it is a stronger statement, because under certain conditions believers do not sin. "He that abideth in him sinneth not." But mark what is said of the Lord, "In him is no sin." "If *we* say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," God has put that stamp on every one who says he has no sin. I was once well acquainted with people who went in for two applications of the blood of Christ. Their idea was as if they were always lying in a brook which was always cleansing them. They would say that their inward sin was cleansed out like a washed garment. Every bit of that kind of thing is outside of scripture. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." But what about the Lord? "In him was no sin." Adam was created in innocence. You and I have to go back to natural birth, like the Psalmist—shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin—that is the characteristic condition; we spring from a man whose

fall has corrupted the race. But as to the Lord, it was not only that He *did* no sin, or that in Him was no sin, but "He *knew* no sin." He was the holy One of God. When in 1848 it was propounded that the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man was, in virtue of identifying Himself with Israel, subject to God's governmental wrath—at a distance from Him!—it was a good thing for us that J. N. D. stood for the truth of His Person; had it been otherwise we should not have the rich heritage of the truth of God which is ours to-day "He knew no sin," otherwise He could not have been made sin; His qualification was His absolute perfection, His unsullied holiness. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." *That is reconciliation.* In Him man is made perfectly suitable to God, so that God has perfect complacency, perfect pleasure in man. Take the opening of Luke; the angel announces the birth of Christ, and suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." That is the point in reconciliation. Read that side by side with Genesis vi., "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Think of that! Then look at that blessed One

under the eye of God, a babe in swaddling clothes, all heaven in accord, the angelic host sweeps down from the plains of light and glory praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." That is the idea of reconciliation. Then that blessed One goes into death; He becomes the sin-offering. That is the point in Romans, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." God has laid the foundation of reconciliation in the death of Christ. "He hath made him to be sin for us." Mark those two words "*for us.*" You might have said, "It is wonderful, but who is it for?" Do not hesitate to put yourself in the portion of that "*us*," you have a place there; that little word "us" embraces every beloved believer.

Well, beloved, there is the foundation, there is the basis, but now I would like to shew the effect of it and in what connection it stands. It is not a question now of what God is for us, but of what we are for God. Reconciliation is on that side. It is set forth in parable in Luke xv.; the father had compassion on the younger son—he ran and fell on his neck, and (the way it is put in the Greek is beautiful) "covered him with kisses." Actions speak louder than words. Is there any need for the father to say, "I am glad to see you" when he

was on his neck kissing him? How the father's joy and delight at his return must have spoken to the heart of the young man, and then he can confess his sin. When he was hugged by his father it was easy to him to confess. He says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." Now we get reconciliation; the father speaks, not now to him but to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." What is all this for? He is to be made suitable to his father. The best robe is reconciliation, and the ring and sandals are the accompaniments of reconciliation. Paul felt the pressure of the ring when he wrote the end of Romans viii. Thank God there is something in Christianity that has no end. Put sandals on his feet—that is sonship. These are the accompaniments of reconciliation. The object is that when the son finds himself face to face with his father, the banquet on, he is perfectly at home; that is where reconciliation comes in. Do you know what it is to be perfectly at home in the presence of God? If we were more in the good of reconciliation we should have more freedom as worshippers, we should be so at home in the very presence of God.

Then there is another side, "That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the

cross." How does it work out now? In relation to each other, just think of fifty or a hundred saints in the good of reconciliation! there would be no trouble among them. The thing that is at the bottom of trouble is the flesh; the flesh is gone in reconciliation. New creation is not a mixture of iron and clay and no cohesiveness. "Created according to God in truthful righteousness and holiness." Ah, beloved! if we knew more about it we should be beyond all suspicious fear of each other. By-and-bye we shall be *actually*—not only in faith—but *actually* apart from the flesh; we shall get along all right then, but we *may* get along all right now. Look, beloved, we may get our heads filled with doctrine, but it is one thing to have one's head filled, and another thing to have divine things in spiritual vitality in one's soul. We *need* the ministry of reconciliation. What for? Is it simply to sit down in rhapsody? We need it that we may be here for the pleasure of God, for the pleasure of Christ, walking in happy relations together. We should be walking like trained soldiers, keeping step, "Thinking the same thing," "Joined in soul," "Having the same love." The ministry of reconciliation will bring this about. And let me say the ministry of reconciliation is for all saints. May the Lord encourage our hearts with regard to it.

RISEN WITH CHRIST—
ITS SUBJECTIVE RESULTS.

(Col. iii. 1–17.)

In a certain sense, beloved friends, it would be more satisfactory to bring the entire epistle before you, though we could not do it on one occasion, but I trust that our consideration of the portion we have read may be found profitable to our souls.

What we have in Colossians iii. is really the practical effect of the subjective power of the truth; by that I mean the power of the truth as wrought by the Spirit in our own souls.

Verse 1 of this chapter is directly connected with verse 12 of the preceding chapter. "Buried with him in baptism, in which ye have been also raised with him through faith of the working of God who raised him from among the dead." So that the "if" with which this chapter begins is not for one moment to be taken as the conditional if; it is the demonstrative if, the if of moral sequence. There is no doubt about the statement that we have been raised with Him. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is

sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God." The test is not what the mind may apprehend or assent to; it is really as to the power of the truth. There are two things with every one of us, there is the heart and the mind. We are told in one place: "Keep thy *heart* with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"; the heart is guarded more than anything, and we are told in regard to the mind that as a man "thinketh in his soul so is he." God desires to obtain possession of our hearts—to bring them under divine control. In the Old Testament scriptures it is said: "My son, give me thine heart." It is a wonderful thing when the heart is given to God; it is a witness to the power of the truth, and, so far as this epistle is concerned, the saints at Colosse are spoken to from the outset as those who "knew indeed the grace of God in truth." They had not only *heard*, but they had *received* the glad tidings; they had come under the control of the gospel; the fruit of it was manifest in them; that is, they did not merely know it in scriptural statement, but it had taken effect in their souls. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." John said: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the

truth." It is when the truth is brought home to us by the Spirit of God—made good in us—then it is that we know "the grace of God in truth." I want you to see the subjective power of the truth in the heart. It belongs to the heart to *seek*. Jehovah said to His people in Old Testament times: "In the day thou seekest me with thy whole heart I will be found of thee." Now we are told to seek those things that are above. In this scripture it is a question between things on the earth and things above; it is not a question as to whether things here are good or bad, we are to seek the things which are *above* where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. I trust, beloved, we shall not shrink from facing this truth here to-night, because just in the measure as we allow it to come right home to ourselves we shall be profited. There is divine attraction given to the heart, and the attraction for the heart to "things above" is that they are where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Then the apostle takes up the *mind*. He says: "Have your *mind* on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Now the position in which the saints are seen down here is as having died; they have been circumcised with the circumcision of the Christ, they have been buried with Christ, and

then he says that we are *risen* with Christ. "We are risen with him through faith of the working of God who raised him from among the dead." It is a position taken up in the mind: you regard yourself now as risen with Christ. It is a wonderful thing to have faith of the working of God who raised Him from among the dead. As circumcised with the circumcision of Christ you have put off the body of the flesh, and then as having died with Christ you have died morally to the rudiments or elements of this world; and not only so but you have been buried with Him in baptism, put out of sight, and then you are risen with Him, and that puts you in a position outside and beyond everything here. Then there is the further statement—we are quickened together with Him, and that is a very important point to observe in this epistle, because in being quickened together with Him there is power and ability given to take up the position in which God sees us—*power* to act *according* to it. You will observe in all this how in the Epistle to Colossians our previous history comes in, not exactly as it comes in in Romans; the standpoint here is different from that of Romans. Romans has its application more to us individually, as viewed in connection with our individual life of responsibility here; but not so Colossians; yet it has our former history

in view. In Ephesians it is not our responsible life, as alive in the world that is in view, but our state viewed as regard of God—dead in offences and sin; hence there is nothing about being buried with Him by baptism, or about circumcision, nothing about dying with Christ; in Ephesians we are dead, and Christ is dead, and we are quickened with Him, are raised up together with Him, and are made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; so our responsible history here does not come in in the Epistle to Ephesians; but here in Colossians it *does* come in, and so these various steps are traced by the Spirit of God in connection with our spiritual history. Colossians is complete in itself, and the position in which the saints are seen in Colossians is peculiar to that epistle.

We have often been told that in Romans, though we have death with Christ, resurrection is future, because it is actual: "If we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death, so also we shall be of his resurrection." So quickening in Romans is in the future tense and applies to the quickening of our mortal bodies; but in Colossians we are quickened *now;* we are made to live together with Christ in the life in which He lives consequent upon resurrection. Christ is viewed not only as risen, but as ascended; but the

saints are not taken off the earth in Colossians Well now, that is the position.

"If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above." The question is often raised—What *are* the things above? I think the answer is this—"He that seeks finds." If you do not know what the "things above" are, that is sure evidence you have not been seeking, because there is no such thing as seeking and not becoming acquainted with what you seek. It is really what is practical as the result of the subjective power of the truth that is before the mind of the Spirit of God in Colossians iii., and you can see how perfectly incompatible with the fact that we have died with Christ it would be to seek the things *down here.* You have done with the whole scene here, everything below is behind you; death has closed up the history of your connection with the things on the earth; *ye have died.* And what about your life? "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Now that is another peculiar and very beautiful feature of the truth in Colossians. You have got your life, but it is hid with Christ in God. Where is Christ? He is hid in God. Christ has gone out of sight so far as this world is concerned. In John xii. you get the close of His public ministry in the solemn statement, "And going away, he hid himself from them";

and He has been hid in God ever since. "When Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory." It is no question in Colossians of the manifestation of anything before the world. One has often said, and would say it carefully, that in Colossians there is neither testimony before man nor conflict with the power of evil; but our life is hid with Christ in God, and it goes straight on to manifestation in glory, for the first four verses are a complete paragraph. If you are manifested *here*, I say—you are going to be manifested ahead of Christ. He was down here—He was presented to man, but He was rejected . . . but He is going to appear in glory, and when Christ, who is our life, appears, we also shall be manifested with Him. It is not a question of being like Christ now in glory, "What we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

We have a twofold unfolding of His glory in chapter i. There is what Christ is in relation to God and what He is in relation to the saints. As regards the first, He is "the image of the invisible God." Everything that could be made known of God has been made known in Him; as it is put in Hebrews, "Who being the effulgence [the outshining] of his glory and

the expression of his substance." Then we have His relation to creation, and how it exposes the blunders of man in departing from the scriptures, when divine Persons are distinguished as they are in the creeds of Christendom, and they tell us that the Father created all things. When divine Persons are distinguished in the scriptures in connection with the creation it is the Son, not the Father, of whom it is predicated that "by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth."

Now we come to His relation with the saints. There is a peculiar presentation of Christ in each epistle, and the way in which Christ is presented determines the character and scope of the application of the truth in each epistle. In chapter i. 17 it says: "He is before all, and all things subsist together by him" (you are still in the region of the creation of God and His relationship to that creation). Then in verse 18: "And he is the head of the body, the assembly" (here we get His relation to the saints); "who is [the] beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that he might have the first place in all things."

In Ephesians, where His resurrection and exaltation are unfolded, it says that God "gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him

who fills all in all." You can understand the Spirit of God making that prominent in Ephesians, because there we are in the presence of the vast scope of the counsels of God, the universe is in view, both heaven and earth, and so He has given Christ to be Head over all things, and no doubt it is in that capacity, if one might say so reverently, that He is Head of the assembly—the body.

But the statements of the Spirit in Colossians are confined to the body—the assembly; that brings in the thought of the assembly as His body. I think perhaps we have been inclined to take an ecclesiastical view of the body, but I am sure in that we have been mistaken. You body is that in which you live. If I know anything about you, your character, your ways, I have learned it in your body. I am expressed as a man in my body, and you are expressed in your body. So the body of Christ is that in which Christ is to find expression here, not in the form of testimony; no doubt that *is* a testimony (there are plenty of scriptures for that), but so far as this epistle is concerned, Christ expressed in His body here is for the delight and satisfaction of the heart of God. And I think it is a wonderful, yet an exercising, thought. I do not know how far we have compassed it and given it a place in our souls, that as the body of Christ, the saints are here

as a continuation of Christ for the delight of God. Take the portion I read just now in chapter iii. Our authorised version says: "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord": but it should read: "Singing with grace in your hearts to God." You are not singing to be heard by anybody here; this spontaneous outburst of joy in the saints is for the delight and joy of the heart of God. How little have we taken in what it was to God to have Christ down here. He was ever the delight and joy of the heart of God. And, beloved, although Christ has gone on high the body of Christ is here, to be the reproduction, in the power of the Holy Ghost, of Christ in the saints, and this is for the delight of God. Do not think that I overlook the idea of testimony or conflict, but I would that we were big enough spiritually to take in what there is in this epistle to the Colossians. I think it is so encouraging and so exercising. We might ask ourselves—What delight is God finding in us here as the body of Christ? As I have said, it is not an ecclesiastical idea, we should discard that thought; it is entirely moral.

Well now, that is the view of the epistle. I have not time to go fully into what is in chapter ii., but I will just say briefly that in chapter ii. there are certain adverse elements against which the saints are safeguarded and

warned. There are three things mentioned, and they are alike in this respect—"man" appears in them all. You are to beware of the philosophical man, who is after the rudiments of this world and not according to Christ, and you are to beware of the religious man with his sabbaths and new moons, and then you are to beware of the mystical man, the man who is vainly puffed up with his fleshly mind and dares to intrude into things that are unseen. That chapter deals with the outside things; but in chapter iii. we come to ourselves. It is not there what is outside of you but what is within. In Ephesians we are looked at as in Christ, but in Colossians Christ is in us: "Christ in you the hope of glory," and the early part of the chapter deals with the things that would hinder—things from within ourselves, hence verse 5—"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth." By those who understand it we are told that the tense of the Greek verb here is in the aorist; that is—you do not keep on mortifying; the effect abides, you do not repeat it, but you maintain it. When the Israelites entered the land God said to Joshua, "Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time"; Joshua did not keep on circumcising them after they had come into the land, yet they pitched their tents at Gilgal, and

when they went out to conflict they went out from Gilgal, and when they returned they returned to Gilgal—it had to be maintained, and so the mortifying has to be maintained. Your members are here, and they are the only connection with earth that this epistle will allow; you have to put them to death, because if you do not, if there is not the maintenance in your soul of what this putting to death means, these members which are upon the earth will betray you into what will really hinder your soul. "In which ye also once walked when ye lived in those things." It is not contemplated that the saints are walking in these things, but where the connecting link exists (these members upon the earth) death must come in. Verse 8: "Put off, ye also, all these things, wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, vile language out of your mouth." What are these exhortations based upon? They are based upon a spiritual fact, and that fact is that you have "put off the old man with his deeds." It is not simply what God did with the old man in the cross of Christ, though if God had not dealt with the old man in the cross of Christ, it would have been out of the question for you or me to deal with him; but this is our side—*you put off*. "Having put off the old man with his deeds," you have learned the character of the old man, and you have

done with him; you have put him off and based upon that fact are these exhortations; you put off in habit, put off practically everything that is of the old man. You could not have *put off* the old man without the corresponding side—the *putting on*. You ask, Where is the ability for it? Why, you are said to be quickened together with Christ. That is ability enough. Do not say you are not able for it; people shut their eyes to these plain statements of scripture, and looking only at themselves they say they cannot. Paul, in the gaol at Rome, says: "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power"; perhaps you will say, that is the language of an apostle, but no, it is the language of a Christian, for Philippians is the epistle of christian experience, not apostolic.

Well now, "having put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him." Here it is the new man in the sense of *fresh;* in Ephesians it is the new *kind* of man, it is remarkable how the terms are transposed in the two epistles. In Ephesians it is "having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness," and the moment you bring in the thought of creation you have got something that did not exist before, you have got the new kind of

man—you are renewed in the spirit of your mind. Here (in Colossians) you put on the new —that which is fresh—and it is "renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him." The word translated "renewed" here is just the word that means in a way what the new man does in Ephesians; you are renewed here after the image of Him that created him, "wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything, and in all." You are outside all the distinctions mentioned here—religious, —circumcision or uncircumcision, bondman, freeman; you might actually be a poor slave, but you are outside of it, or you might be a master, but you are outside of it; you have come into that spiritual sphere where Christ is everything.

Now I want to come to these last verses just for a moment before we close. "Put on *therefore*, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye." The word "*therefore*" refers back to the beginning of verse 10, and as the exhortations preceding verse 10 are based upon the fact that you have

put off the old man, so these exhortations are based upon the fact that you have put on the new. "Put on *therefore*." It is practical, and comes out in our relationships one with another in the body of Christ. Now it is a matter of common experience that the closer the relationship the more you are tested by it, and so the Christians that put one to the test are not the Episcopalians, &c., or those I do not walk with. I do not have anything to do with them, though, of course, I trust I carry about in my heart, by the grace of God, real affection for every Christian; but it is the people with whom I *walk*, the Christians with whom I am in close touch—that is where the test comes.

Let me call your attention to these terms: elect, holy and beloved. They primarily apply to Christ as a Man down here; He was God's elect, God's holy One; He was God's beloved One; and the very titles applicable primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man here are taken up now and applied to His people. It is very touching, very wonderful—"Put on therefore" as what?—"*as the elect of God*." These traits were all true of Christ as God's elect One, God's holy and beloved One; how these things shone out in undimmed moral splendour in His Person!

"Bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness. longsuffering." Have we got these

things on? These traits of Christ are to be reproduced in us, manifested in us. I trust that, by the grace of Christ, we may apply these things honestly to ourselves. "Forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye." Are we equal to it? Oh, what a truth the body of Christ is!—it is to be down here for the expression of Christ, for the delight and joy of the heart of God; it is wonderful! The opportunity of expressing Him down here is what heaven and eternity will not give us. Just think of being down here in this scene of contrariety as the body of Christ, to express the traits of Christ, the very life of Christ coming out in us!

Then verse 14: "And to all these [add] love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful." Love is the bond of perfectness. It is a delightful thought to me that there is something down here that is the bond of perfectness; there is that which never fails —love never fails. "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts." What a wonderful thing among the saints in their relationship to each other in the body of Christ—the very peace of Christ presiding. You know the idea of a presiding officer, he is in entire control, he

presides, and so, "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful." That is individual. The Spirit of God knows *where* to drop that word—"in one body"; we need *each* to be reminded of that; nothing contrary to unity can be entertained for one moment.

Verse 16: "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another." Our ability to teach and admonish one another depends upon the word of the Christ dwelling in us; how could we do it apart from that? It is Christ Jesus who has been made to us wisdom from God. Not one of us has any resources of wisdom in himself. "In psalms, hymns, spiritual songs." There are three varieties of praise, and I have no doubt they are in an ascending scale. There is great liberty, and while the unity of the body must never be forgotten there is variety. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. What kind of singing is that? The singing in scripture is spontaneous. I love the thought of the spontaneity of Christianity. In John iv. the Lord says, "The water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life," and in John vii. He speaks of "rivers of living water" flowing out. Paul says,

"I will sing with the spirit, I will sing with the understanding also." What music for the ear and heart of God!

There is one more verse: "And everything, whatever ye may do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." Everything is covered by His name; you do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him. It is not a formula of language put into your mouth, it is like Himself—the company is in correspondence with Him, they do all in His name, giving thanks. That is just what He did. We are not told much about it, but we are told *once* (and it is very striking), that when everything down here was so dark: "*At that time*, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes."

May we understand it and follow Him, and be in correspondence with Him.

PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

(Heb. x. 19–24.)

There are two distinct thoughts in connection with Christianity; that is, the thought of privilege and the thought of responsibility; they are distinct thoughts, but they are connected thoughts, and I think the scripture I have read would serve to emphasise in our minds the divine order in Christianity.

The divine order in Christianity is first privilege, and then responsibility, and I think that the secret (if one may speak of that which is so plainly set forth in the scriptures as a secret) of ability to take up and fulfil the responsibility that belongs to us hinges upon the measure in which we apprehend and enter into and enjoy what is privilege. An unenjoyed privilege conveys no power. The principle of that scripture which we find in the Old Testament—"The joy of the Lord is your strength," is true now. I may see that a certain privilege belongs to me as a Christian, and I may assent to it in my mind; but if there is not the enjoyment of it, I derive no strength from it.

Let me say another thing that may perhaps be helpful. In taking up the scripture I have read it is of the greatest importance that everything connected with Christianity should be taken account of in a spiritual way; we

must drop from our minds every thought of materialism—we are hindered by materialism to a much greater extent than perhaps we are prepared to acknowledge. I think it is a matter to be deplored that there seems to be so little ability to take account of spiritual things —that there is so little spirituality amongst us. It is only as we are spiritual that we can take account of things in a spiritual way.

The figures employed by the Spirit of God in the scripture I have read, especially in the first part of it—that part of it which pertains to privilege—are figures of material things: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies." That, of course, to a mind acquainted with the letter of scripture brings before it that which was really material. We are speaking from Hebrews; there is nothing of the temple in Hebrews; there it is the tabernacle exclusively, and so the holy of holies would as a figure bring before us the west end of that tabernacle—tent of the testimony of Jehovah. There was the court surrounding the tabernacle and inside those curtains which rested upon the sockets of silver, and then the tabernacle was set with the face of it toward the east; and there was a twofold division—at the eastern end there was the holy place; there was the outer veil through which the priest must enter into the holy place;

and in the west end of that tent behind the second veil was found the holy of holies.

Now we must drop the figure; it is all right to get the thought of the Spirit of God in the figure, but you must not be detained in your mind by the materialism of the figure.

There are two statements about Christ—one is a negative statement and the other is a positive statement; the negative statement is that Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands—and that is the end, for you and me, as Christians, of the material thing; but in the same chapter (chap. ix.) he says that Christ has entered into the holy of holies, so that there is that which the Spirit of God speaks of as the holy of holies, which is not at all material, but which is exclusively spiritual, and that is what we want to be concerned about, for it is a wonderful privilege, and I desire to speak very simply of it. I do not say too much about the holy of holies as figure, because there is that which is more important—I mean that which the figure leads to. I know I read this passage years ago, and I used nearly always to find my mind struggling with the thought of the holy of holies, trying to grasp what it must mean for us Christians, and I found on looking more closely at the passage that I was not taking much account of what follows—"Let us *approach*." You draw near

to God, and God is greater than the holy of holies; this is not the only statement of privilege, but it is a very encouraging word. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, *let us approach.*" I would that the Spirit of God might bring it home to us; it would be a poor thing if we missed it to-night; it would be a poor thing if we only thought of the holy of holies as a figure. To me it is most marvellous that God not only presents the wonderful privilege to us, but that God Himself seeks to encourage us to avail ourselves of it. Think of the Spirit of God saying, "let us approach," let us draw near! Why then should there be any hesitation? I hope that we can all say that there are no fears—no hesitation any longer in approaching.

I have a good word to say to every believer here to-night: it is a very encouraging thought that when you touch privilege in Christianity you touch that which does not belong to any exclusive class; in that way Christianity in this epistle stands in marked contrast to Judaism. In the first place there was the court of the tabernacle; then the tabernacle, and inside the tabernacle there was first the

holy place, and then was the most holy place. But there was a kind of exclusiveness connected with every part of it. The ordinary Israelite, legally clean, might enter within the curtain of linen which sheltered the court; he might tread the court of the tabernacle; he might enjoy the privileges of that court, but the first veil, which guarded entrance into the tabernacle, was the limit for him; he would not dare to pass behind that first veil. Not even the Levite, although he had a special place and special relationship to the priest, and special service connected with the things of God, would dare to pass within that first veil; none but the priest—a man thirty years of age and upwards, of the family of Aaron, a man who had been duly consecrated and set apart in a most solemn way to the priestly office; he alone could enter that holy place. But what about the most holy place, and that second veil? Well, you will bear with me if I read what the Spirit of God says about that second part of the tabernacle, chapter ix.: "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the

golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people."

But now in Christianity, when you touch privilege, you touch that which is common to every Christian. When we come to Christianity, not a privilege belongs to the Apostle Paul that does not belong to you and to me; if it were office, or gift, or apostolic authority, we should all have to take a back seat; but as to privilege, as to approach, there is no difference. Are there young Christians among those to whom I am speaking now? You may say: But it is not long since I was converted—since I got peace with God. Let me say to you (and get the good of this into your soul; it is intended to cheer you), you are just as much entitled to the privileges of Christianity as the most advanced Christian. Men may stand out in connection with their gifts; it is not

very common, but the Lord does seem to put His mark on one and another, whom He has gifted, and they are marked in that respect amongst their brethren, something like Saul, who, amongst the children of Israel, stood head and shoulders above all of them—there *are* such, and for my part I think it is our wisdom to recognise them; but when it comes to privilege, all distinctions are wiped out, it belongs alike to all. Look at the term which the Spirit of God uses—look at that lovely word: "Having therefore, *brethren*, boldness," &c. Are you one of these brethren? I thank God that I am. I am not aware that the term is used in two senses. It may be used in the sense of our relationship one to another, or it may be used as it was used by the Lord when He said: "Go to my brethren"; and again as we get in chapter ii. of this epistle: "Both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." But it belongs to us all, and I think, beloved, the Lord would distinctly encourage our hearts to-night in connection with the marvellous privilege which belongs to us.

Well, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness." What is boldness? It is liberty—title. "By the blood of Jesus." I wish I could speak of that properly. Is it a question of cleansing? "The blood of Jesus Christ his

Son cleanses from every sin"; and one believer is no more cleansed than another. But it is not here exactly the blood in its *cleansing* efficacy—it is a question of approach; it is the blood giving a divine title to enter into the holy of holies. Hebrews is a wonderful epistle. I would that we were all more familiar with it. It would be a wonderful thing for us. It is not only that propitiation has been made, but Christ has entered into the holy of holies. He has entered in for every believer. He has entered in in the power, the virtue, the efficacy of His own blood. Do you want any better title to enter than that? You might as well ask me if I want anything better than the blood to cleanse me from every sin: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from every sin." That is true, but it is just as true, and would admit of just as emphatic a statement that the blood has opened the way into the holy of holies for every one of us; there is nothing more to be done. Christ has entered into the presence of God for us . . . then where He is is the holy of holies.

"The new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God"—not *high* priest, here it is *great* priest—"let us approach." We could not enter there without the Priest, but the Priest

is there: the blood has been shed, the way into the holiest has been opened for us—boldness to enter there is the privilege alike of every believer, young and old, whatever they may be—they are one of the "brethren"; they are embraced in that blessed term.

Now do you want to think of the subjective side? We will dwell on it for a moment. We *may*, and I would like to assert that there is holy liberty to take account of ourselves subjectively. The scripture says: "Let us approach"—with what kind of a heart?—a "true heart." There are various sorts of hearts spoken of in scripture, there is a "true heart." A true heart is a heart that beats responsively to the wonderful way that God has come out in the blessed Person of His Son. In chapter iii. we get: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (there is no other calling in Christianity than a heavenly one), "consider the *Apostle* and High Priest of our confession, Jesus." Now a "true heart" is a heart that beats responsively to what has come out in Him as the Apostle—it beats in answer responsively to that.

Then, "In full assurance of faith." Why should we make any difficulty about that? Are you not a believer? are you not in full assurance of faith? are you doubting? are you questioning anything that God says? God forbid.

"Sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience." That is no rare or exceptional attainment; that is true alike of every Christian. I remember when I had a wicked conscience, but thank God it has gone and it will never come back. I know I have failed, but that is not a wicked conscience.

"And washed as to our bodies with pure water." You know that when one of the family of Aaron was thirty he was consecrated; he was brought to the door of the tabernacle and he was washed as to his body with pure water; and there is that which answers spiritually to that in Christianity. It is not a matter of attainment, but "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." That washing is complete—it never needs any repetition. It is like what the Lord said in John xiii. about His disciples (making the exception of Judas), "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean." Well now, there was the priest. He was washed all over; then he was brought to the brazen altar, and there were three sacrifices—the burnt offering, and the sin offering, and the ram of consecration—and when it was a question of the ram of consecration the blood was brought and put upon the tip of the right ear, and upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon

the great toe of the right foot. Never was that repeated. Once was enough, and if once was enough then, do not you think once is enough now? Thank God, it is. Do you think God is inviting us to approach, do you think God is spreading out before us the blessed privilege of entering the holy of holies knowing that we are not fit? He knows we *are* fit, and reminds us of our fitness. That ought to make every believer's heart exceedingly glad.

Do you say, What do you do in the holiest? You do not do anything. When you get there, you find it is a wonderful place. You will find Christ there in the presence of God, and Christ there is the Antitype of what was literally in the holiest. Outside the veil there was the candlestick, the golden altar of incense, and the table of shewbread—all these were outside, but what was there inside? Read verses 4, 5 of chapter ix. Christ is the blessed Antitype of all these things, and when you enter there you will contemplate Him.

We need to be enlarged: we do not know Christ in all His blessed relations. We want to know what Christ is in relation to God, and to the vast system of God's counsels and purpose; we sometimes sing about the universe of bliss, but do we take in what a wonderful thing it is to come to know Christ in what He is in relation to God? These things in the

holiest set forth what Christ is in relation to God and the purpose of God, and how God will by means of Christ bring to pass a universe of bliss. What we need, beloved, is spiritual education; in the world it is not very difficult to discern a man of education; and *we* need to be spiritually educated. It is in the holy of holies—the presence of God—where Christ is known in His relation to God and in His relation to the whole system of the purpose and counsels of God—that is what we need to *know*. If a man is educated naturally, it comes out in his life—he has got a knowledge of things, an understanding of things, so that, being an educated man, he is capable of doing things that other people are not capable of. But *we* ought to be thoroughly educated on the line of Christ and what Christ is in relation to God. That would bring about such an enlargement, such an expansion in our souls that we have not yet known. We live too much in relation to ourselves even in divine things. Charles Wesley said, "Myself in things divine I sought, and mourned because I found them not." We need to get thoroughly *educated;* then we can come out in our responsibility, and what is the proof of your education? The first proof of it is that you "hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering." You go dead against the current

of this world, It is not the rapture in Hebrews which is the hope; the point of the hope in Hebrews is: "For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay." He is going to "appear to those who look for him the second time without sin for salvation."

My brethren, do not give up; do not give up to the currents—especially the religious currents—of this world. To-day (December 25) is a great time of high religious festivities, and, beloved, there is no connection between it and the hope. There are things that belong to our responsible life in flesh, but, as J. N. D. says:

> "And stayed by joy divine,
> As hireling fills his day,
> Through scenes of strife and desert life,
> We tread in peace our way."

You are a stranger here—a "Gershom."

Now what is the next thing? You "hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, for he is faithful who has promised." You hold fast the confession of the hope that is based on the promises of God, and the promises of God are based upon the faithfulness of the One who promised. Is not that a good foundation?

Then, "Let us consider one another for provoking to love and good works." If you are spiritually educated, the saints are the people you will be occupied with. Now as to the way we are to consider one another—"good works."

I can tell you exactly how to provoke your brethren to love; that is, by loving them; there has never been any other way like it; and you provoke them to good works by doing good works yourself—very simple and practical.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some; but encouraging one another, and by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near."

Driving hard and fast bargains now is the spirit of the world; it is everywhere, this rush after shillings and pounds. It ought to concern us to keep wholly separate from the terrible spirit of commerce, and the rush after things here. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God"! We ought to be able to see that the day is drawing near. We profess to believe in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; we need to be thoroughly aroused about it.

The Lord grant, beloved, that we may be encouraged in respect of our privilege, and that we may so know and so enjoy it that we may be able to answer to our responsibility and to come out in the way this scripture indicates, so that we may be here not only for His glory, but so to connect His glory with the welfare of His people, that we may be here for the promotion of His interests among His people and for the mutual encouragement of each other.

THE LORD'S DESIRES FOR HIS OWN

(John xiv. 1–3; xvii.)

In these scriptures we have the Lord's own utterances, but there is this difference—in John xiv. the Lord is speaking to His own disciples; in chapter xvii. He is speaking to His Father, as we see from verse 1. In both these scriptures the Lord speaks from the standpoint of His own love for us, and if He speaks from the standpoint of His love for us, we must, in order to understand what He says, be brought in our souls to take that standpoint, because what He says can only be understood if we occupy that standpoint. The great difficulty with us is to take the standpoint of the Lord's love for us. It is natural for us to reverse it and to think of ourselves, and try from some standpoint of our own—*our* love, or *our* experience, to reach the height of the Lord's love for us, but this is a great mistake. The Lord speaks to us here so positively, so unreservedly and so unconditionally. There are no "ifs" about it, no room for anything on our side. The Lord speaks so freely and so absolutely here, and the more we occupy the

standpoint of His own love the more we shall find that things become increasingly clear and certain to us. In both these scriptures (chap. xiv. 1–3 and chap. xvii.) the Lord looks on to the future. It is not a question of faith or love on our part; He speaks in regard of the future, of what lies before us. (Vers. 1–3.) So we do not speak of *faith* and *love* here, but we speak about *hope*.

In chapter xiv. the Lord says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." Now that settles the question of our place in the future! What an expression of His love! He has gone in His great love and interest for us to prepare a place for us. He says, "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am there ye also may be." How indescribably lovely it is, "where I am." He is speaking from the standpoint of His own love, not from the standpoint of our desires In Philippians i. Paul says, "Having the desire for departure and being with Christ." That is wonderful! But beautiful as that is, the desire of Christ overshadows the desire of Paul. He is speaking purely from *His own love*. He has such love for us that He has no thought of going to fill the place for Himself. He says, "I go to prepare you a place." The other day I picked up a tract by J. N. D. about the Melchizedek priesthood, and my heart was

moved in reading it. At the end he said, "We have a better portion than reigning. Our portion is to *be with Himself.*" Think of it! The Lord seems to say, "I love you so much that I cannot be content to remain without you. I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself, that where I am ye also may be." What place has that thought of His in your heart and in mine? There is in scripture a great deal that tells us about our part, both present and future; but whatever has been presented to us has been presented to affect us *here* and *now*. We may well challenge ourselves and say, "How am I affected by it?" But the effect of what the Lord says here would be to put our hearts in the attitude of waiting for Himself. Has He lavished His love on us without stint and without measure, and has He not ground for counting on our appreciation of His love, so that when He expresses it there should be an answer to it in us? The Lord takes account of our love, He takes account of our response to His love. See the pains He takes to get an answer to His love. That is one great point in the breaking of bread; He is seeking to secure in us a response to His love. The point here (ver. 1) is—the Lord counts on our hearts leaping up in response to His love. He is coming again to receive us. Do we say we want to get out of things here? That is

not it; it is—"that where I am ye also may be." When Paul says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," his desire is "to be *with Christ.*" How few are longing "to be with Christ"! One recalls the last words of dear Mr. Bellett, "Do not talk to me of crowns, and thrones, and kingdoms: I want to see the Man of Sychar's well, the Man who met the widow of Nain." It ought to be thus with us. That is His thought when He says—"that where I am there ye also may be." I *delight* in that! The thought of being with Himself is beyond everything else. It is from the height of His own love for us that He says, "I am coming again . . . that where I am ye also may be."

Now turn to chapter xvii. 24. There, too, He expresses the desire of His heart. From verse 20 we get the part that applies to us directly, as those brought to believe on the Son of God. So He desires that we should be with Him where He is. What for? The Lord here goes beyond chapter xiv., for there He only says, "I am coming again," &c., but *now*, pouring out the desires of His heart to His Father He tells *why* He desires to have us with Him—"*that they may behold my glory.*" He had said in verse 22: "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me,

that they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me." But here it is, "That . . . they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Everything that belongs to Him as Man has been given to Him by His Father. "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." We get that wonderful beginning in John i. Think of it: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." That is His distinct personality, and yet "The Word was God. He [that Person] was in the beginning with God. All things received being through him." He became flesh and came in human condition and dwelt among us. How exquisitely beautiful those words, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And His desire is, "that they may behold *my glory*." That is not the glory that He shares with us. The crowning privilege of being with Himself is to behold *His* glory. We are going to behold it. I cannot explain it. Who could? It was given to Him as Man—as belonging to Him as Man. He wants to have us there to behold it, and we *shall* behold it—a glory expressed in Him which will be an eternal witness to what He was with the Father. Think of that! and I ask do you not think it should have a place in our hearts beyond everything else? How these

words of His ought to affect us! He had said in verse 22, "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them," but *this* glory (ver. 24) we shall *not* share, but He wants us with Him that we may *behold it*—and He connects with it: "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." In that place there will ever be the expression of that which shall speak of the Father's love for Him "before the foundation of the world," and we shall behold it. How wonderful are these desires that fill the Lord's heart, and at *such* a moment!

After expressing these desires to His Father He says, "That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." I cannot *expound* that, but *there it is!* The inside of a Christian is better than the outside! The Father's love for His Son is to be *in* them and He—the Object of the Father's love, *in* them too! Christ dwelling *in them* would be the conductor to their hearts of the Father's love.

HOME IN VIEW.

NEARER home; yes, one day nearer,
To our Father's house on high,
And His love is growing dearer
As the days glide swiftly by.
Sorrow's storm will soon be over,
Tempests never more will come,
Tents no more will form our cover,
We shall dwell in peace at home.

"Yet a little while" He's coming!
We have heard His promise sure;
Patience waits, while love is yearning
For His presence in the air.
Sleeping ones will rise immortal,
Living we shall changèd be;
Then caught up through glory's portal
We shall all our Saviour see.

"As He is" in all His glory
His own image we shall bear,
From Himself learn love's sweet story,
And His throne and kingdom share
O, what bliss! to be thus with Him,
Satisfied His heart will be;
Filled with joy beyond all measure,
When His glorious face we see.

J. PELLATT.

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